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MAZA OF THE MOON / OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

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OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

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ONE MAN AGAINST THE HIDDEN WORLD OF THE MOON

As soon as he arrived on the Moon, Ted Dustin found himself thrown into desperate action. *Maza an Ma Gong,* the beautiful ruler of the friendly faction of Moon-people, had been attacked by a weird globe-ship, and had fallen with her winged mount to the surface. As Ted hurried to her rescue he saw a fantastic sight:

The girl was standing at bay before one of the round-bodied enemy Moon-men. The two were fencing — not with blades of steel, but with ray projectors. As Maza sought to reach her antagonist with her red ray he warded it off with a green ray from his own projector, and in turn menaced her with his weapon while she parried with the red ray.

Ted drew his pistol degravitor to dispatch the man — but he was unaware that there were many more of the enemy creeping toward them in the dark of the Moon's surface.

MAZA OF THE MOON

OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

ACE BOOKS, INC.
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MAZA OF THE MOON

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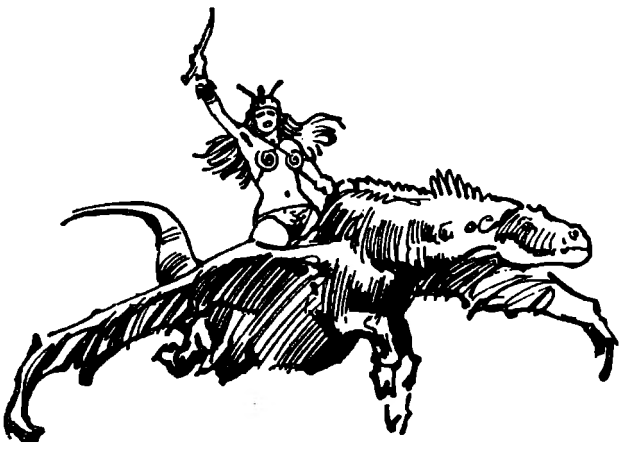
To
My Wife

Printed in U.S.A.



I. DIFFICULT PROJECT

"WE'VE GOT to win that reward, Roger, or close up shop." Ted Dustin, youthful president and general manager of Theodore Dustin, Inc., reached mechanically for his tobacco pouch, filled his black briar, and sighed.

Roger Sanders, assistant to the president, deposited his sheaf of papers on his desk, closed the door to the private office, and sat down in the chair facing his superior.

"You mean — ?"

"I mean," replied Dustin, flicking his lighter with his thumb, "that in order to prepare the projectile for launching, we've spent every cent we had, and borrowed a lot besides. Theodore Dustin, Inc., is flat broke, and the plant is mortgaged from roof to drains. If we don't win that reward our creditors will be picking our bones in thirty days."

"Mr. Dustin." A female voice, apparently issuing from empty air, spoke his name. He turned to the radiovisiphone, a plain looking disc resting on a small pedestal at his elbow. It was wireless, and contained no buttons, levers or controls of any kind.

"Yes." As he spoke, the picture of his information clerk flashed on the disc. The word "Yes" had completed the connection.

"Mr. Evans of the *'Globe'* would like to know if you are ready to interview the representatives of the press."

"Any other reporters waiting?"

"There are twenty-seven in the reception room. Mr. Evans says you told them all to come at once."

"I did," replied Dustin. "Send them up in five minutes. Off."

When he spoke the word "Off," the picture disappeared, the connection having been broken by this word uttered alone with sharp emphasis.

While Roger went out for chairs, he rose and walked to the window. For some time he stood there, gazing at the smokeless, chimney-less factories beneath him. During twenty of the thirty years of his life, or until 1954, there had been chimneys on these factories. Combustion — the burning of coal and oil — had been necessary to keep their wheels turning.

But Dustin had changed all this by his invention which economically captured and stored the energy of the sun, converting it into electricity for light, heat and power, and putting manufacturing on a newer, cleaner basis. Now, at the age of thirty, he had lived to see his sun power units in almost universal use.

The money derived from this he had immediately diverted to research and experiment with a still mightier objective in view — to harness the power of the atom. On the eve of success he found his funds nearly dissipated, and therefore spent his last few dollars in the building of an emplacement, a gun, and a projectile, for the purpose of winning the million dollar reward offered by the Associated Governments of the Earth to the man who could first succeed in touching the moon with a finger of terrestrial matter.

He turned from the window as Roger ushered in a group of eager, expectant reporters, and said:

"Take seats, gentlemen."

Twenty-eight chairs creaked. Twenty-eight automatic in-

terview recorders were quickly swung forward on their shoulder straps and adjusted. Then there was a tense moment of silence.

Ted cleared his throat.

"You fellows know," he said, "that science, having conquered the air, now wants to conquer interplanetary space. The first logical step is the shortest one. The nearest heavenly body being our moon, and that being far enough away to present a pretty tough problem, the princely reward of a million dollars has been offered the man who will first send a projectile or vehicle across this space and prove it to the satisfaction of the Associated Governments of the Earth.

"Through some mysterious channel of communication, known only to you reporters, you found out that I had entered the race. Naturally I have, up until now, kept my plans a secret from the public and my competitors. But that's all over with, now. The gun, which was constructed according to my specifications by the American Ordnance Corporation, has a bore of seven feet and a length of three hundred and fifty. Despite the fact that it will be reinforced to more than four times the proportionate thickness of the most powerful guns built today, my estimates show that it will be destroyed when the projectile is fired. It was shipped to Daphne Major, one of the smaller of the Galapagos Islands near the equator, on March 10th. My projectile, which was manufactured in my own factory, was shipped today, fully assembled and crated, in an International Air Freighter.

"I've calculated that March 20th will be the most favorable day for firing my projectile, as it will be the day when the moon, in its endless race with our planet around the sun, will cross the path of the earth. The projectile will be timed and fired to overcome the forward speed and gravity pull of the earth, travel in the arc imparted to it by the earth's axial rotation, and wait for the moon at precisely the right point in space, according to my calculations. Its principle will greatly resemble that of the floating mines dropped by minelayers in the World War of forty years ago.

"The force which will send the projectile out into space is one which I have, after countless experiments, succeeded

in liberating and, to some extent, directing. It's the terrific force locked in the atom.

"The motions of the projectile, after it has left the earth, will be automatically controlled and corrected by my latest invention, the atomotor, a mechanism which separates electrons from protons and utilizes the terrific repulsive force of protons toward protons and electrons toward electrons, permitting them to escape through specially constructed cylinders after they have imparted their energy to the cylinder heads and thence to the projectile. These cylinders are pointed in all directions, thus making it possible for the automatic course correcter to control the motions of the projectile.

"The projectile will be protected at the base by a firing plate of easily melted metal, which will be destroyed before it leaves the earth's atmosphere. It will also be protected by six outer layers of reinforced asbestos with braced vacuum spaces between them.

"In the head of the projectile is a charge of explosive which will be set off by contact with any solid object. This powerful explosive will, when ignited, emit a lurid flash of light that will be easily visible if it strikes the dark side of the moon, and also a thick cloud of black, non-luminous smoke that will spread over a circle a hundred miles in diameter will be readily discernible if it strikes the light side.

"On tomorrow, the sixteenth, I leave for Daphne Major for the purpose of loading and pointing the gun."

"That's all there is to the story, fellows, until after the gun is fired."

Roger opened the door, and the reporters, after wishing the young inventor success, filed out.

II. LAUNCHED

ON THE morning of March 16th, Dustin and Sanders set out for the Galapagos in the former's swift Blettendorf super-electroplane, which was capable of a speed of eight hundred miles an hour. They arrived about noon and worked assiduously, with the result that the gun was loaded and ready for the herculean task of lowering it into the emplacement by night.

On the seventeenth it was pointed according to the calculations of the young inventor, and on the eighteenth was braced in place by hundreds of tons of special, fast-setting, reinforced concrete.

On the nineteenth the U.S. Aerial Battleship Hawaii arrived with a group of trained observers, representing the Associated Governments of the Earth. She was equipped with high power telescopes, spectroscopes, and photographic apparatus, all to be used by or under the direction of this assembly of picked scientists.

Busy as he was in getting his men and equipment loaded and away from the danger zone, Dustin was compelled to hold a reception for his distinguished visitors, show them the gun and its emplacement, and answer a thousand questions. Sanders, however, assumed the burdens of the executive to such good purpose that before the scientists had boarded the Hawaii to be taken to their point of observation and there await the zero hour, he had everything loaded and off the island.

All that night, and up until one thirty on the twentieth, the inventor busied himself connecting the automatic firing apparatus and seeing that it was in perfect order.

By that time, Dustin, Sanders and Bevans, the pilot, were the only humans left in the archipelago. After a cold lunch and a final tour of inspection, each man made ready to play his part.

It was estimated that the moon would cross the path of the earth at 6 hours, 53 minutes and 13 seconds past noon, central standard time. This brought the firing time to 2 hours, 32 minutes and 22 seconds past noon, or approximately 2:30 P.M.

Promptly at 2:20, Bevans started the helicopter blades and rising above the rim of the crater headed northwest toward the point on the equator, 97½° west longitude, which it was thought would be most favorable for observation, and to which the scientists had gone the evening before. This was less than a forty minute run for the powerful super-electroplane.

As they hurtled along, Ted glanced, from time to time, at

the chronometer. At 2:30 he hastily unslung his binoculars, opened the rear window and trained them in the direction of Daphne Major.

"Can't see the island from here, can you?"

"Hardly. It's a good two hundred and fifty miles back and we couldn't possibly rise high enough to bring it to our horizon line."

"Then what do you expect to see?"

"Some sign of the explosion, possibly. Take a look for yourself."

While Roger trained his own binoculars rearward, Ted called up to Bevans:

"Start the smoke trail at 2:35," he ordered, "and watch for aerial waves. We may be in for a good shaking up."

"Very well, sir."

At 2:32, Ted and Roger sat with bated breath, their binoculars directed toward the archipelago, listening intently while the chronometer ticked off the seconds.

The zero hour arrived and for two seconds thereafter the anxious watchers saw nothing. Then, with amazing suddenness, a gray, mushroom-shaped cloud spread skyward above the horizon. Just above it, a thin pencil of smoke was barely discernible through the glasses, pointing straight toward the zenith.

"Hurray! She's off!" shouted Roger.

Ted did not answer. His face grew suddenly grave.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Roger. "Isn't everything all right?"

"I'm afraid we've started something we didn't consider in our calculations," he replied. "Do you see that black cloud forcing its way upward through the gray one?"

"Yes."

"And the band of yellow immediately beneath it?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"A volcanic eruption," replied Ted. "Daphne Major, you will remember, was the crater of an extinct volcano. We've blown off the top, and outraged Mother Earth is doing the rest. Appears like a terrific eruption from here, too. And look: There's a reply from the heavens. See those flashes in the

clouds? A thunder storm has formed in the upper regions."

At this moment thick, black smoke began belching from the rear of the electroplane, and their view to the rear was obscured.

"Full speed ahead, Bevans," shouted Ted. "Give her all you've got. We're due for a heavy squall in less than five minutes."

Shortly thereafter, signs of terrific agitation in the atmosphere were registered in the rear of the smoke trail.

"Ascend at an angle of 45°," ordered Ted. "We'll ride with the gale."

Scarcely had he spoken ere the plane received such a shock that both Ted and Roger were thrown to the floor. It was accompanied by a continuous roar as of a thousand thunderclaps let loose at once, echoing and reechoing with seemingly undiminished intensity for several minutes.

Rising with difficulty, for the ship careened frightfully, Ted dragged himself to the rear window and looked out. Their smoke trail had been completely dissipated, and once more he had a clear view toward the rear. Two things he noted, almost simultaneously — a mountainous, white-crested wall of water swiftly overtaking them on the surface of the Pacific, and just above it a swirling, tumbling mass of clouds, black beneath and silvery white above, with vivid flashes of forked lightning playing between them. He shouted up the speaking tube:

"Higher, Bevans. Use your helicopters, man, or we're lost!"

There was a jerk and a roar as Bevans hastily threw the helicopters into gear, then a rapid upward movement that glued them to the floor until their bodies had gained momentum.

Quick though he had been in carrying out orders, the pilot was not quick enough for the forces of Nature. As if incensed at this puny attempt of man to conquer her, she seized the frail craft in the grasp of her powerful winds and played with it as if it had been a feather. At the first impact, Ted saw Roger strike his head on the edge of the refrigerator and slump to the floor. He tried to go to him, but found this im-

possible. The craft dipped dizzily, spun like a top, and rolled end over end. Gripping the doorknob, unable to help his fallen companion, he found his feet sometimes in midair, sometimes on the wall, and sometimes on the very ceiling. There was an unending glare of lightning and a continuous roar of thunder. Rain, sleet, and ice pellets alternately beat in through the unclosed rear window.

The craft steadied a bit for an instant, and Ted succeeded in seizing Roger's ankle. Dragging the limp form of his companion toward him, he passed his arm beneath the slender body and held it as best he could, meanwhile keeping a tight grip on the doorknob. Though the storm continued outside, Bevans seemed to be getting the plane under control once more, for it rocked less and less as time went on.

Presently, too, the lightning flashes appeared farther apart, and the intervening darkness grew steadily lighter.

As soon as he was able to release his grip on the doorknob, Ted gently lowered his assistant to the floor of the disordered cabin. Switching on the light, he made a hasty examination of the gash in the pale forehead and found, to his relief, that there was no skull fracture. After carefully dressing it from the contents of the emergency kit, he placed a pillow beneath the head of the still unconscious Roger, and made his way to the rear window. At a glance, he saw that they had risen above the electrical storm, but were still beneath a dense cloud stratum that shut off the sunlight like a blanket. He shouted up to the pilot:

"All right, Bevans?"

"Sound as a dollar, sir."

"Good. Keep those helicopters going and see if we can get up into the sunlight."

"Yes, sir."

Roger moaned feebly, then opened his eyes as Ted bent over him.

"Wh-what happened?" he asked.

"You were knocked out. Nothing dangerous. Be all right soon. Want anything?"

"Cigarette."

"Sure thing. Here."

Ted placed it between the ashen lips and fired it with his atomic lighter.

"Lie still for a while," he counseled. "I'm going to try to make some observations if we can ever get above these confounded clouds."

It was some time before the welcome flash of sunlight appeared. After making his observations, Ted calculated that they had been driven more than three hundred miles southwest of their course by the storm. When the plane was once more headed toward the point where they hoped to find the Hawaii, he descended the stairway to see what he could do for Roger. He found him in one of the cabin chairs, curiously examining a film of dust that had formed on the map-table.

"Where do you suppose that came from?" he asked, poking it with his finger.

"Volcanic ash," replied Dustin. "Sometimes travels clear around the world, so we needn't be surprised to find it here after that huge upheaval. How's the head feeling now, old man?"

"Better, thanks."

"Good. We'll just have time for a cold snack before we board the Hawaii."

As soon as they had eaten, Ted took food up to the pilot and steered the ship while he ate.

"Nearly there, aren't we, sir?" asked Bevans, after he had swallowed the last morsel.

"Almost. I'll give you the signal to descend, from the cabin. We're going to need our searchlight, I'm afraid."

Once more in the cabin, Ted consulted his instruments. Presently he gave the order to descend. In a moment they were plunged into deep gloom which the mighty searchlights failed to penetrate for more than fifty feet in any direction.

"We'll never find them this way," said Ted. "Try the radio, Roger, will you?"

Sanders sat down in front of the powerful instrument and turned the dials.

"She's dead," he announced. "That electrical storm must have burned out something."

"Here. You keep watch while I see what's wrong," replied Ted.

It only took the inventor a moment to find the trouble.

"Burned out every tube," he said, "and I forgot to bring a spare set. We'll just have to keep cruising around, I guess, and hope for luck. A nice mess we've gotten into."

"For my part I'm thankful to be alive, radio or no radio," said Roger.

"Righto, but I'll certainly be disappointed if I can't be aboard the Hawaii with those official observers when the projectile strikes the moon. We may be able to see it with our binoculars, but I doubt it."

As they cruised about in ever widening circles, the time slipped away, but there was no sign of the Hawaii. Presently, when the chronometer showed 6:20 Ted gave up the search and ordered Bevans to hurry back to the designated observation point. They barely reached it at 6:50, and another minute was consumed in rising above the highest cloud stratum.

The sun had set and the half-illumined orb of the moon was just above the western horizon. Both men trained their binoculars on it simultaneously. Came 6:53 and they waited tensely for the thirteenth second, at which instant the projectile was calculated to strike.

The thirteenth second came and went without incident. The fourteenth — and then — directly in the center of the celestial target things happened. Both men simultaneously saw a tiny light flash for an instant across the dark side of the moon's sunrise line, while a small black spot slowly grew in size on the sunlit side of the line.

"Hurray! She hit dead center!" shouted Roger.

Ted watched the black spot in silence for a moment.

"Seems to have landed plumb in the middle of the crater, Hipparchus," replied Ted. "Thought I had miscalculated the time, for an instant, but I see the reason now. We saw the flash just 1¼ seconds after it took place because it takes light that long to travel from the moon to the earth."

The black spot faded perceptibly. In a minute more it had disappeared completely.

"There goes our evidence," said Ted. "I hope they saw it while it lasted."

He called up through the speaking tube:

"Back to Chicago, Bevans."

III. STARTLING RESULTS

WHEN DUSTIN reached his office in Chicago, he found a terse radiogram from the commander of the U.S. Aerial Battleship, Alaska, awaiting him.

> Just found the Hawaii, wrecked on surface of Pacific with radio out of commission. Official observers unable to see moon on account of clouds. Am towing the Hawaii to San Francisco.
>
> J. C. Farrell, Commander,
> *U. S. A. B. Alaska.*

He read it in silence, then handed it to Sanders.

"Does this mean that we lose, Ted?" he asked.

"It means," replied Ted, gamely trying to disguise the quiver of disappointment in his voice, "that Theodore Dustin, Inc., will be sold for the benefit of creditors — lock, stock and barrel, within the next thirty days."

During the days that followed, Ted and Roger were kept busy putting the affairs of the company in order, preparatory to turning it over to its creditors. At the final moment their attorney had secured them an extra thirty day extension, but this, after all, was only a prolonging of the agony.

A Russian manufacturer had made the highest bid for the plant and patents, and sorrow prevailed in the entire organization when it was announced that the creditors would, in all probability, accept the bid.

The indignant official observers had, as Ted had predicted, unanimously declared against even a probability that his projectile had struck the moon. True, an unofficial observer in Guatemala had reported seeing a flash and a dark cloud near the crater Herschel at the appointed time, but this statement was unsupported from other quarters and, therefore, of no value to Ted's claims.

The eruption and storm had made it impossible for the South American observatories to view the moon at all at that time, while all other observatories so situated as to have even slight opportunity for a glimpse at the proper moment, reported exceptionally cloudy weather.

On the morning of May 5th, Dustin sat moodily in his private office, surrounded by a thick cloud of blue smoke from his black briar, when Sanders burst into the room waving a newspaper which he thrust beneath the eyes of his employer.

"Can you beat this, Ted?" he asked. "They say your projectile came back to the earth and nearly destroyed London!"

Ted read the screaming headline, and gasped.

TERRIFIC EXPLOSION NEAR LONDON!
MAY BE DUSTIN PROJECTILE
RETURNED TO EARTH

At four thirty this morning a huge missile fell into the Thames River near Gravesend. It exploded with terrible force, killing more than fourteen hundred people, and injuring thousands. The shock of the explosion was felt all over the British Isles as well as on continental Europe, and was registered by seismographs all over the world.

Scientists have calculated that the projectile fired by the inventor, Theodore Dustin, would return to the earth in thirty days, but they now believe it must have traveled in a larger orbit than they estimated, and that this is the missile of Dustin returning later than predicted.

Ted pushed the paper aside wearily.

"The 'I told you so' boys are at it again, Roger," he said. "They make me sick. In order to prove a pet theory, they're trying to make a wholesale murderer of me in the eyes of the world. I'm weary of it all."

Then a voice suddenly issued from the radiovisiphone. It was the operator.

"Mr. Dustin."

"Yes."

"Station WNB-437 announces that it is about to broadcast important international news. Shall I tune it in for you?"

"Please."

A picture instantly flashed on the disc of the radiovisiphone — the announcer for the World News Broadcasters, standing in the station at Washington, D.C. He held a paper in one hand, and a watch in the other, evidently waiting for the exact second to begin his announcement. Presently he cleared his throat and looked up.

"We have just received a communication from Paris, France," he announced. "A projectile similar to that which fell in the Thames near Gravesend has fallen into the heart of Paris. The city is in ruins and there has been a terrific loss of life, unestimated at this time. This shock, like the one which came a few hours ago, has been recorded by seismographs all over the world. Scientists who hold that the previous explosion was caused by the Dustin projectile have issued no statements regarding this one. No one we have consulted can offer any explanation of this singular and terrible occurrence."

The announcer paused, then turned to receive a new sheet of paper from a messenger.

"The situation with regard to these projectiles is becoming more serious every minute," he said. "I have here a radio message from New York City. A third missile has just fallen into New York Harbor, sinking or destroying all shipping in the vicinity, killing and maiming thousands of people, and shattering glass in the windows for miles around. Two Broadway skyscrapers are reported to have toppled to the street, adding to the shambles as panic-stricken people scurrying for shelter were crushed in the ruins."

Again the announcer paused to receive a new sheet of paper.

"A message from Professor Fowler of the Yerkes Observatory states that he was looking at the moon this morning between the hours of one and four o'clock, and that during that period he saw five distinct and quite brilliant flashes of light in the region of the crater, Ptolemy. He has just learned of the explosions at London, Paris and New York, and thinks

that they may have some connection with what he saw on the moon early this morning. It is his theory that the moon is suffering from a bombardment similar to that which the earth is undergoing."

The picture of the announcer suddenly disappeared from the disc and that of Dustin's operator appeared.

"I had to tune out WNB-437, sir," she apologized. "The President of the United States is calling."

"Tune him in," replied Dustin.

Instantly there flashed on the disc the familiar countenance of President Whitmore. He looked worried, and his voice trembled slightly as he asked:

"Mr. Dustin, have you any explanation of the calamities that have overtaken the world in the last few hours?"

"I have no facts for you at present, Mr. President," replied Dustin, "but I have a theory."

"And what is that?"

"It is my belief that the moon is bombarding the earth. She reached an advantageous firing position last night, and Professor Fowler saw five flashes between one and four o'clock this morning. According to my theory she left five huge interplanetary mines in the path of the earth and we have already run afoul of three of them. Moreover, they were aimed and timed with such accuracy that one of our chief cities has been destroyed and two more came near to meeting the same fate."

"You have stated that your projectile struck the moon. Do you believe that our satellite is inhabited, and that the explosions we have experienced were mines or missiles, fired in reprisal by the lunar inhabitants?"

"That is my belief, Mr. President."

"Then, Mr. Dustin, you are jointly responsible with the Associated Governments of the Earth for this horrible and unexpected catastrophe, and we shall look to you to see that the bombardment is stopped."

"I'm sorry, Mr. President, but I am without funds, and my company is to be taken from me by my creditors in a few days."

"This, Mr. Dustin," replied the President, "is an interna-

tional emergency, and must be met with every ounce of power at our command. We need you — the world needs you and your organization. Draw on the government for such funds as you require at once, and I will issue an order on the treasury for sufficient funds to satisfy every one of your creditors.

"At present I can only promise you the cooperation of our own government, but I am calling a meeting of the Associated Governments today, and I feel sure they will be with us. Do all you can, as quickly as you can, and spare no expense to carry the thing through as swiftly as possible."

"I'll do my best, Mr. President," replied Ted.

The picture of the President faded from the disc, and Roger rose from his seat, his face aglow with enthusiasm for this new undertaking.

"Atta boy, Ted!" he said. "When do we start? And how?"

IV. MOON PEOPLE

ON THE following day the factory of Theodore Dustin, Inc., hummed with an activity it had not known for weeks.

The fact that Ted's prediction regarding the other two missiles from the moon had come true shortly after he had uttered them, solidified public confidence in him to a degree even greater than that he had enjoyed before the firing of his own projectile and his subsequent condemnation by the official observers.

The last two missiles to strike the earth had apparently not been aimed so accurately as the others, but the intent of those who fired them had been just as evident, for one had plumped into the middle of Lake Michigan, not far from Chicago, and the other had alighted in the Tyrrhenian Sea near Rome, both causing tidal waves and some damage to shipping, but without the large number of fatalities which attended the falls of the others.

There were people, of course, who condemned Ted for having fired his projectile to the moon and thus having brought about the bombardment in reprisal — a bombardment which, for all they knew, might take place every month at the time the moon was in a favorable firing position.

None there were, however, who condemned the youthful scientist so thoroughly as he condemned himself. Not that he spent his time, or any part of it, in self-reproach. There was, in fact, no time for anything but work, with the busy program he had set for himself and his men.

Two major projects, both being carried on at once, claimed every minute of his waking time. One was the building of a gigantic radio station, with which he hoped to get into communication with the inhabitants of the moon. The other, the construction of an interplanetary vehicle driven by atom-otors, in which he hoped to reach the moon in person. The radio, he expected to have ready for service in two weeks, but the vehicle, because the manufacture of many of its delicate and intricate parts could only be entrusted to a few of his best men, would take six weeks to complete at the very least.

During the first three days and nights he worked without sleep. Then outraged nature asserted itself, and he was compelled to rest. From then until the day of the completion of the radio station, he put himself on a sleep ration of four hours a day.

On May 19th, just two weeks after the projectiles from the moon had struck the earth, and nearly two months from the day Dustin's projectile had exploded on the moon, there was a large and august assemblage in the general office of Theodore Dustin, Inc.

Forty of the world's leading linguists, representing every race and color on the globe, talked excitedly in a multiplicity of tongues. Nor were modern languages solely represented, for there was a small group of men whose life studies had been the forgotten languages of the past — men who had wrested from crypts, pyramids, monuments, caves, and the ruins of ancient cities, temples and fortresses, the secrets of the speech of the ancients.

Nor were these all. A still smaller group consisted of the greatest men of science, sent by the leading nations of the earth.

From time to time, they glanced expectantly at the door of Dustin's private office.

Presently the door opened and Dustin stepped out, accompanied by President Whitmore of the United States.

Instantly the buzz of conversation ceased, as Ted held his hand aloft for silence.

"We are ready, gentlemen," he announced. "Follow me to the elevators."

Three trips of the elevators landed everyone on the roof. In the center was a building containing the sending and receiving apparatus. Overhead were stretched the wires of the gigantic aerial.

Ted conducted his party to the doorway of the building and into a small auditorium with seats and desks arranged in a semicircle. Here Sanders met them and assisted Ted in showing each man to the desk which had been provided for him.

When all were seated, Ted and Roger pulled back two sliding doors which disclosed a small stage and a radiovisiphone with a disc ten feet in diameter, which faced the gathering.

"Now, Mr. President," said Ted, "if you will do us the honor of pressing the button on the desk before you, you will close the circuit of the set through which we hope to establish communication with the inhabitants of the moon. The zero hour has arrived. In accordance with the orders of the Associated Governments of the Earth, every broadcasting station in the world has ceased to function."

The President smiled and pressed the button. A terrific crackling roar from the radiovisiphone followed his action.

Ted speedily adjusted a set of dials on the desk before him, and the roar subsided. Then he stepped before the radiovisiphone.

"People of the Moon," he said, "we know not in what language to address you, so we are about to speak to you in all the known languages of the earth. Our mission is one of peace — our purpose to make apology for having wronged you — a people of whom we know nothing, and whose very existence we did not suspect. Will you answer us, People of the Moon?"

The young inventor evidently did not expect a reply — not so soon, at least. He turned, and beckoned to the German linguist to take his place. It was his purpose to have the speech repeated in each language in turn. About to step down from the platform, he was startled by sudden cries of amazement from the men facing him.

"Look, Ted! Look quickly, behind you!" he heard Roger shout.

As he faced the radiovisiphone once more, it was his turn to gasp in astonishment not unmingled with awe, for revealed in the pellucid depths of the ten foot disk, and apparently not five feet from him, stood a woman — a glorious vision of feminine beauty that held him entranced.

She was not large — a scant five feet in height, he judged — but there was a certain dignity in her bearing which somehow made her appear taller. The golden glory that was her hair, dressed in a style new and strange to the inventor, was held by a band of platinum-like metal powdered with glistening jewels. Her clothing, if judged by earthly standards, was not clothing at all. Gleaming meshes of white metal, woven closely together, formed a light, shimmering garment that covered though it revealed the lines of her shapely breasts, slender waist, and lissom hips, leaving arms, shoulders and legs bare. A jeweled dagger hung from a chain-like belt about her waist, and a huge ruby blazed on the index finger of her left hand. On her feet were sandals, apparently constructed from the white metal.

Behind the young lady whose appearance had so amazed the distinguished gathering of scientists, stood two men, each well over six feet tall. They appeared to be guards, for each leaned on the hilt of a huge, broad-bladed, scimitar-like weapon that reached from the floor to the level of his breast, and both wore shining plate armor and helmets of strange design.

The girl smiled, revealing at the same time, a set of small, even white teeth, and a most adorable pair of dimples. Then she spoke. Ted stood like one bewitched, listening to the clear, flute-like tones, but Roger had the presence of mind to turn on the recorder.

She had not spoken more than a dozen words, however,

when the image in the disc blurred and her voice was drowned by a confusion of discordant sounds.

"What's wrong?" asked the President of the United States, anxiously.

"Another station cutting in, damn it!" replied Ted, frantically turning his wave-trap dial with one hand and the selector dials with the other.

While he labored with the dials an image seemed slowly to be forming in the disc, taking the place of the one which had just disappeared. For a time, two voices were heard, one unmistakably that of the girl, growing fainter and fainter, the other, the coarse tones of a man, constantly increasing in intensity.

As the new image cleared, it proved to be that of a man of remarkable dimensions — with a body that was almost globular, to which were attached incongruously slender arms and legs. Although he could not have been more than five feet tall, his round head was nearly twice as large as that of the average earth man of six feet. His nose was flat, and his eyes slanted toward his temples above exceptionally prominent cheek bones. As he spoke in sing-song monosyllables, he disclosed rat-like teeth, set far apart, and wobbled a long, thin moustache, the two ends of which drooped from the corners of his mouth to his breast.

On his head was a tall pointed helmet of gleaming yellow metal, built up in tiers like a pagoda and ending in a sharp spike. His body was encased in scale-like armor of the same yellow metal, and his breast was crossed by two purple sashes, fastened at their intersection by a golden medallion on which was emblazoned a scarlet dragon. From one of these depended a sword with a small, round guard, and a hilt nearly a foot in length, and from the other, a weapon which slightly resembled an automatic pistol. Behind him stood a semicircle of smaller beings of similar rotund shape, whose helmets were shorter and of copper-colored metal, as were their suits of armor. They wore brown sashes and copper medallions emblazoned with green dragons, and in addition to weapons similar to those of the larger man, carried tall poles

surmounted by sharp discs that slightly resembled buzz-saws with exceptionally long teeth.

The appearance of the girl had created a stir in the room, but when these grotesque creatures became plainly visible on the disc, animated whispers turned to an uproar, and Ted was forced to call for silence.

Scarcely had the confusion abated, ere an aged Chinese doctor arose and came up beside Ted.

"What is it, Dr. Wu?" asked the young scientist, his hands busy with the dials. "Can you understand him?"

"A word, here and there, seems intelligible — something like the language of my revered ancestors."

At sight of Dr. Wu, the speaker in the disc paused and nodded. It was as if he had recognized someone racially akin to him. The doctor bowed and smiled in return, and said something in a monosyllabic tongue. Its phonetic similarity to that which had come from the globular being was striking, as was the fact that there was a slight facial resemblance between Dr. Wu and the lunar speaker.

The Lunite pursed his lips and knit his brows as if endeavoring to understand. He turned to the semicircle of men behind him. They all appeared puzzled. Then he dispatched one of them, who disappeared from the disc, and facing Dr. Wu once more, uttered a short sentence.

It was the doctor's turn to knit his brows and shake his head. Again he essayed speech with the armored man. Apparently he was not understood. The process was repeated several more times with the same result. It seemed that the two were on the verge of understanding each other, yet could not quite make themselves intelligible.

Then the man who had disappeared from the disc a few minutes before reappeared with another, a bent figure who hung on his arm for support. His face was wrinkled and toothless, his sparse moustache was gray, and his limbs were more spindly than those of the others. Instead of armor he wore a garment of quilted black cloth over his emaciated form.

The man in the gold armor looked at Dr. Wu, then pointed to the old man and uttered a few words. The doctor nodded,

and addressed him. The old fellow pondered for a moment, then shook his head. Again Dr. Wu spoke to him. He shook his head once more, and reaching beneath his robe, drew forth a scroll and writing brush. After rapidly tracing a number of characters on the scroll, he held it up. The writing bore a striking resemblance to Chinese.

Seizing Ted's sleeve, the doctor spoke excitedly.

"Is the photo-recorder on?"

"Yes."

"Good. I believe I can translate that writing, given time."

Facing the old man in the disc, Dr. Wu again nodded and smiled. Then he pointed skyward and said:

"T'ien."

The old man nodded, smiled, and repeated excitedly: *"T'ien! T'ien!"* then bowed as if in devotion.

The doctor also made the devotional obeisance and said: *"Shang Ti."*

The old man shook his head, signifying that he could not understand. Then he pointed to the man in the golden armor, and said:

"P'an-ku."

"P'an-ku!" repeated the doctor with a look of astonishment on his face, and made obeisance to the golden one.

That individual, with a look of annoyance, suddenly turned on the old man and released a volley of monosyllables. The old fellow groveled before him and shook his head.

Then he of the golden armor made a sign with his hand, whereupon the disc suddenly became blank.

"Guess the interview is over," said Ted, shutting off the radio. "Now how can we find out what it was all about?"

"I can explain the last three words," said Dr. Wu. " *'T'ien,'* is the oldest word in our language which has the meaning of 'The Heavens' or 'God.' This word was understood. *'Shang Ti,'* a later word for 'God' was unintelligible. The old man pointed to the one who was evidently the ruler, and said: *'P'an-ku.'* According to our traditions, *'P'an-ku* was the first human being, corresponding to the 'Adam' of your Bible."

"From which one might deduce," said Ted, "that the peo-

ple we have just interviewed are remotely related to your earliest ancestors."

"So it seems. If you will let me have the phonetic and written records, and a fast electroplane, I believe that by consulting our ancient writings I may be able to render a translation in a few days."

"Splendid!" replied Ted. "Both will be ready within an hour."

V. ULTIMATUM OF P'AN-KU

THREE DAYS later Ted received a radiogram from Peiping, reading as follows:

Honorable Sir:

I avail myself of the privilege of submitting below the result of my poor efforts at deciphering the written characters of the Moon People. The spoken language was, with the exception of a few scattered words which cannot be put together to make sense, wholly unintelligible to me.

Here follows my sorry translation:

Why have you destroyed Ur? You, the people of Du Gong have thrown to us, the Imperial Government of P'an-ku, mightiest emperor of Ma Gong, the tcha-tsi (meaning unknown to translator) *of war. We are greater and wiser than you, and can crush you with ease.*

You have demonstrated that you are not fit to govern yourselves — that you are a menace to the people of the great Lord Sun, his eight apostles and their children. The Imperial Government of P'an-ku will send a viceroy to rule over you. Submit, and you will live happily, the subjects of P'an-ku. Resist, and you will be destroyed.

In my humble and unworthy opinion, the word, *"tcha-tsi,"* means either some instrument of war or perhaps a challenge to war, and has the same symbolical significance as does the gauntlet in English.

DR. WU

The contents of this message were immediately transmitted to the President of the United States, and he lost no

time in calling a council of the Associated Governments of the Earth by radiovisiphone. Ted Dustin was a party to the conference, and assisted in drafting a placatory note to P'an-ku. The note, which was sent to Dr. Wu for translation into the Lunite language, was as follows:

To the Imperial Government of P'an-ku:
Greeting:

The Associated Governments of the Earth regret the destruction of Ur, and are willing to do all in their power to make amends.

The destruction was unintentional, as the Associated Governments of the Earth were unaware that Ma Gong was inhabited.

The Associated Governments of the Earth make full apology for having wronged the people of Ur, and stand willing to pay a reasonable indemnity in treasure, food, raw materials, or manufactured products, but are united in the purpose to resist and retaliate for any attempt at conquest.

After the note had been drafted and dispatched it was unanimously decided at the meeting that Ted was entitled to the million dollar reward, there being now no longer any doubt that his projectile had struck the moon. The treasurer of the association was, accordingly, ordered to pay him that amount.

It was late in the evening when Ted called Roger into his private office.

"Get that translation from Dr. Wu, yet?" he asked.

"Yes. I had it painted in large white letters on a black placard and mounted on an easel in front of the big disc."

"Good. We'll go up now. Everything will be ordered off the air in five minutes, and we'll try to get it through."

They took the elevator to the tower room, where the linguists, scientists, and representatives of the associated powers were assembled as before. President Whitmore was not present, however, because of urgent business in Washington. His place was taken by the Secretary of State. Dr.

Wu, who was also unable to be present, was represented by Dr. Fang, a Chinese scholar of almost equal repute.

At ten o'clock, the zero hour, Ted promptly pressed the button and began manipulating the dials.

This time he was instantly rewarded by the appearance of the dazzlingly beautiful girl who had faded from his vision on the occasion of his last attempt at communication. She was attended by two armed guards as before, and in addition by a bent, graybearded man who wore a richly embroidered robe of dark blue, and sandals.

Both glanced at the writing on the placard which Ted held up. Eagerly watching their faces, he saw that they registered amazement and horror. Wondering what there could be about this pacific message to cause such a reaction, he called Dr. Fang and asked him to write the query: "What is wrong?"

The doctor, a thin, rat-faced Manchu, came forward, but said he did not know the symbols for the words.

The girl, meanwhile, had a scroll and writing brush brought forward by a female attendant. The latter held the scroll aloft so its surface was fully visible, and the girl began rapidly writing two sets of characters thereon. One set was similar to those which had been used in the previous communication. The other was totally unlike it and bore no resemblance to any known earthly characters. Her purpose, however, was quite evident. The two sets of characters were written in alternating perpendicular line side by side, in order that the former language might be used as a key to the latter.

Quick to grasp her idea, Ted called for the photo-record of the message from the Imperial Government of P'an-ku. Beside it, he wrote the English translation, using Roman capital letters for the sake of simplicity. Then beside the placarded note to the Government of P'an-ku, he wrote the original of that note, also in Roman capitals. In addition, he pointed out and distinctly pronounced the English words, one by one.

The girl nodded, smiled, and pointed questioningly at him.

"Ted Dustin," he said.

She pointed to herself and said:

"Maza an Ma Gong."

He repeated the name after her, and pointed to the scroll she had written. She was pronouncing and pointing out each word when she was suddenly crowded out as before by the appearance of P'an-ku and his attendants.

The rotund and imperious P'an-ku read the message on the placard, then turned to the old man who stood beside him and smiled. Ted thought there was a trace of a sneer in his smile. He ordered the old fellow to write his reply, then turned and stalked majestically out of the range of vision. The old man held his message aloft for a few moments as if fully aware that it was being recorded. Then he let his arm fall to his side, and the disc became blank.

After supplying Dr. Fang with a set of photo-records of the messages, and dispatching another to Dr. Wu, Ted and Roger went to the private office of the former for a conference.

"It seems to me," said Ted, after he had his briar going, "that there's something putrid in Denmark. Did you notice the expression of horror on the faces of the girl and the graybearded man when they read our messages?"

"Queer, wasn't it?" replied Roger. "Must have been something in that message that was quite a shock to them. Wonder what it could have been."

"That's precisely what I've been wondering — and it has led to a rather unpleasant thought. I wouldn't mention it to anyone in the world but you — not at present, anyhow — but it looks to me as if Dr. Wu may have double crossed us."

"How?"

"By writing a message of his own in the place of the one we asked him to translate for us."

"But what message of his own could he possibly have written?"

"That," said Ted, "is what I propose to try to find out just as soon as I possibly can. Just before we came up here I sent Bevans to Peiping in the 800. He has orders to bring Professor Ederson back with him. We can bank on the professor to shoot square, and it's quite possible that he can

check up on Wu's message. At any rate, he's probably the best versed white man in the world on the ancient writings of China and Tibet. Has made a life-time study of them, I'm told."

"What about the learned Manchu, Dr. Fang?"

"I think he was bluffing. If there's mischief afoot, you can safely bet he's in on it, and knows how to play his part. He's not so ignorant as he pretends to be. Did you notice the expression on the face of the man in the golden armor? He smiled when he read our message, but the smile was half a sneer."

"It was a mean smile, all right," agreed Roger. "More like the snarl of an animal than the smile of a human being."

"I'd rather have a person frown at me than smile that way," said Ted.

Shortly after midnight a radiogram from Professor Fowler of the Yerkes Observatory arrived. He stated that he had seen five flashes on the moon, coming from the region of the lunar crater, Stadius.

In the wee, small hours of the morning, Chicago was shaken by a terrific detonation.

VI. TREACHERY

IT WAS after five o'clock when all the reports were in. Five projectiles, larger than the former, and each destructive over a fifty mile radius, had struck the earth. The one which had so shaken Chicago had struck at Rochelle, Illinois, completely destroying that city and spreading death and destruction up to the very suburbs of Chicago on one side and across the Mississippi into Iowa on the other.

The second projectile had demolished Cincinnati, Covington and surrounding cities and hamlets with terrific loss of life. The third had struck squarely in the center of Birmingham, England, destroying, killing and maiming as far as Stafford, Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Worcester and Rugby. The fourth, alighting in the harbor of Tunis, had sunk and destroyed shipping, and created a tidal wave which had drowned many people on shore. The fifth had laid waste to Quito, Ecuador and the surrounding territory.

At five thirty, a report from Peiping stated that Khobr and nearby towns had been destroyed or suffered terrific casualties from a sixth projectile.

Leaving Roger in charge, Ted promptly took a super-electroplane to Washington. While he was closeted that morning in conference with the President, fifty aerial fleets of army engineers left the Capital, flying in various directions, but with their destinations kept secret.

During the day, representatives of various nations were called into the conference. Each representative, as he left the President's office, was seen to speed away in a fast electroplane. Not one representative of a Mongoloid Asiatic nation was asked into conference.

After a busy day, Ted rushed back to his office where he found Roger up to his eyebrows in work, endeavoring to placate his wife for his tardiness to dinner, over his wrist radiophone.

"Listen, Leah," he was saying. "I simply can't get away now. I'm trying to manage things alone, you know, and — hello! Ted's here now. Be home, toot sweet, honey. Bye bye."

"You married men — " began Ted.

"Have got it all over you single ones in many ways," interrupted Roger. "Get things going in Washington?"

"Pretty well. I've organized our defense force, and have warned every nation that we have reason to believe is friendly. Before the moon gets into favorable firing position again we'll have enough powerful magnetic poles set up to take care of the United States, and if the other countries keep on their toes they'll be ready, too."

"How do you know the poles will work?"

"Fragments of the lunar projectiles show that they contain large quantities of steel. We've divided the country into fifty zones, in each of which a powerful electro-magnet will be erected. Having erected these in the least populated districts of each zone, and warned the inhabitants to leave the danger area, our sole remaining problem is to make them powerful enough to attract the projectiles, which we can easily do with the resources at our command. Our power plants will be far enough from the magnetic poles to keep

them from injury, and as soon as one pole is destroyed another can be quickly erected."

"You sure have some head on you, Ted. What about the Mongoloid Asiatics? Find out anything?"

"Nothing definite. For the present we're sitting tight and saying nothing. Professor Ederson will, no doubt, be able to check up on them. If they haven't double crossed us there will still be plenty of time to explain my plan of defense to them."

Professor Ederson did not arrive until late the following afternoon. Roger met him on the roof, and immediately escorted him to Ted's private office. He was a little, wizened man, with a grizzled Van Dyke, a thin, aqueline nose, and huge, thick-lensed glasses which gave him an owl-like expression.

"I've been studying the translation of Dr. Wu while Bevans, your admirable pilot, conducted me here," said the professor when greetings were over. "It seems to me to be quite accurate."

"What about the message he wrote for me?" asked Ted.

"I cannot, for the life of me, understand why you sent so belligerent a message," replied the professor.

"Belligerent? What do you mean?"

Ted quickly produced an English copy of the message which he has asked Dr. Wu to translate into the Lunite language for him.

"Why," said the professor, scanning it in surprise, "this is nothing like the message I have translated."

"Let me have your translation," requested Ted.

The professor produced a sheaf of papers from his inside coat pocket, selected one, and handed it to Ted.

The latter read it aloud:

To the Imperial Government of P'an-ku:
Greeting:

The Associated Governments of the Earth have found cause for much mirth in the note of the Imperial Government of P'an-ku. .

It is the intention of the Associated Governments of

the Earth to quickly and completely destroy Ma Gong (The Moon) if its inhabitants refuse to submit to the viceroys which the Associated Governments of the Earth are preparing to send to rule over them.

The Imperial Government of P'an-ku has complained of the destruction of Ur. This is only a minute sample of the destruction which will be wrought on Ma Gong if there are any further acts of hostility on the part of the Imperial Government of P'an-ku.

"Whew!" exclaimed Roger. "No wonder the girl and the old man looked horrified."

"And it's no wonder the imperious and belligerent P'an-ku sneered," said Ted. "Looks as if we're in for it, sure enough, now."

"What about having Professor Ederson fix up a new note, right away, explaining everything and trying to patch things up?" asked Roger.

"We'll try it," replied Ted, "but I can't bring myself to feel very sanguine as to the result."

"Before we draft the note," said the professor, "there are two things I should like to bring to your attention. First, a gigantic radio station has been set up in Peiping. Second, despite the fact that China reported the destruction of Khobr and nearby towns, I flew over Khobr and vicinity and could see no sign that there had been a disturbance there of any kind."

"Professor Fowler only saw five flashes, all of which were accounted for," said Ted. "The destruction of Khobr would have meant a sixth projectile, which left the moon without a telltale flash. As always, two and two continue to make four. There can only be one reason why Dr. Wu miswrote our pacific message — only one reason why the government of China lied about Khobr."

"And the reason?" asked the professor.

"A secret alliance projected — perhaps even perfected by now — between the Chinese royalists and the Imperial Government of P'an-ku."

"Precisely my theory," said Professor Ederson. "The Chi-

nese and racially allied peoples revere their ancestors to the point of actual worship. Small wonder, then, if they should have reverence for the living representative of their supposed first earthly ancestor, P'an-ku, and cast their lot with him and his people. Why man, the thing was inevitable."

"And terrible to contemplate," said Ted, dejectedly. "A united world could have fought off a dozen moons, but a divided world will have a slim chance. And the whole damnable affair is my fault."

"Millions of sparks fall harmlessly, but here and there one starts a huge conflagration," said the professor. "No earthly being could have foreseen the far-reaching effect of your apparently harmless spark, and you certainly are not morally responsible."

"I hold myself so," said Ted, "and it would be a small thing to me, could I but forfeit my own life to end the conflict. I have a plan, but I may not speak of it yet."

"I hope you are not contemplating any foolhardy personal risks," said the professor. "The world needs you more than any other living man, at present. We have thousands of scientists, but only one Ted Dustin."

"Who has proven himself the greatest calamity yet born to the earth," replied Ted. "But let's prepare that message."

A half hour elapsed before a message, satisfactory to all, had been drafted for the Imperial Government of P'an-ku. It took the professor an hour more to put it in the language of the Lunites. Then the air was cleared, and the three men went aloft to the gigantic radio tower.

While the professor held the message on a placard, Ted worked at the dials and Roger managed the recorder.

Their first efforts were rewarded by the faint sound of a woman's voice and a dim vision of the beautiful girl seen on two previous occasions. Almost as soon as it began to appear, the image was blotted from the disc, and from then on until early morning, when the three tired men relinquished their unsuccessful attempt, they were rewarded only by blackness and a faint rumbling sound which greatly resembled distant thunder.

"Looks as if P'an-ku had severed diplomatic relations,"

said Roger, rising from his seat at the recorder and stretching his cramped limbs.

"I'm afraid you are right," replied the professor, leaning his placard against a chair.

"We'll try again, and keep on trying," said Ted. "The Lunites should be amenable to reason if we can get the message through."

Try they did, the following night, and each night thereafter for nearly two weeks. The results were only darkness, and the distant thunderous rumbling. Even the image of the girl had failed to appear for so much as a fraction of a second.

When the efforts of the last night had proved unavailing, Ted threw off the switch and rose with a look of grim determination.

"We must face the facts," he said. "War is inevitable unless P'an-ku can be reached and influenced by a specific message. It will take two more weeks at the very least, to complete our large interplanetary vehicle. By that time the war will undoubtedly be in full progress."

"What do you propose to do about it?" asked the professor.

"I will take the message in person," replied Ted.

"How?" chorused his two surprised companions in unison.

"Come with me and I'll show you, but you must preserve absolute secrecy."

VII. PERILOUS JOURNEY

TED LED Roger and the professor through a side door, and out onto the roof, which was illuminated by the silvery glory of the moon. A watchman challenged them, then saluted respectfully as he recognized his employer.

As they passed the hangars of Ted's fleet of electroplanes, more watchmen challenged and saluted.

Beyond this, they came to a square shed of steel, the heavy metal door of which Ted unlocked with a key taken from his pocket. As his two companions entered he closed the door after them, then pressed a light switch.

"Here is my secret," he said. "Isn't she a little beauty?"

"I'll say she is!" exclaimed Roger, looking admiringly at a craft of silver gray metal about sixteen feet in length, gracefully shaped, and decked over like an Esquimauan kayak, but with a centrally located turret which projected above and below the hull. This turret was of glass braced with the same silver-gray metal which formed the hull, and within it could be seen a bewildering array of buttons and levers which fronted a revolving upholstered seat. Projecting from the upper half of the turret, pointing fore, aft, and to each side, were four tubes, each of which ended in a glass lens. The lower turret was similarly equipped. The hull itself was provided with four searchlights, set to sweep in all directions.

Ted opened a heavily-gasketed door in the side of the upper turret, and said:

"Look her over if you want to, while I put on my driving suit."

"You've been keeping something from me, Ted," said Roger reproachfully while he and the professor admired the snug interior of the craft.

The young inventor laughed, as he opened a drawer and produced therefrom a costume and helmet greatly resembling those worn by deep sea divers.

"Wanted to surprise you," he said, stepping into the one-piece suit and screwing down the clamps which closed the front. "Besides, you had too much on your mind as it was."

"But what is the purpose of the thing?" asked the professor, still peering into the interior. "You don't mean to tell me this craft will fly without planes, rudder or propeller."

"I think so," replied Ted, "although if it does, this will be its maiden flight."

"But how?" persisted the professor.

"Atomotor," said Ted, shortly, attaching his helmet to an affair which slightly resembled a knapsack. "It will fly in the same manner as my projectile flew to the moon, but more slowly, because I don't dare give it the terrific start imparted to my projectile."

"Hardly," smiled Roger. "It would be burned to a cinder. How far are you going tonight?"

"Don't know exactly," replied Ted, "but if luck is with me I hope to land on the moon before the middle of this week."

"What!" gasped Roger. "You expect to go to the moon alone and unarmed?"

"Alone," grinned Ted, "but not unarmed." He had donned the helmet and opened a glass slide in front for conversational purposes. After adjusting the straps of the thing which resembled a knapsack, he took a belt from the drawer and buckled it about his waist. Attached to the belt were two holsters from which pistol-like handles projected.

"Do you expect to defend yourself against super-intelligences as seem to exist on the moon, with a couple of pistols?" asked the professor.

"Hardly," replied Ted. "The things you think are pistols are not pistols at all, but pistol degravitors. They operate on the same principle as the eight degravitors on my craft, but on a smaller scale."

"You mean those eight tubes sticking out of the turret?" asked Roger.

"Exactly," replied Ted.

"What deadly substance do they shoot?"

"They don't shoot," Ted answered with a smile. "They radiate — and when their rays strike matter it disintegrates."

"But how — "

"I can only take a minute to explain, as time is pressing," replied Ted, "but I'll give you a demonstration very shortly. All matter is composed of atoms which are, in turn, composed of protons and electrons, always in motion, the latter whirling around the former as the planets whirl around the sun. The force, therefore, which holds them in their orbits is analogous to the force of gravity, hence I have applied the word until a better one can be found. When I press the firing button of the degravitor, it immediately releases two sets of invisible rays, cathode and anode, both of which when properly pointed, strike the same object at the same time, but at slightly different angles. The positively charged protons are instantly torn from their atoms by the cathode rays, while the negatively charged electrons are taken up by the anode

rays. As the two types of rays diverge, they are torn apart, and the matter which they form immediately disintegrates and disappears."

"Remarkable!" exclaimed the professor.

"Good head!" said Roger. "But how on earth did you manage to make all these things without my knowing it?"

"Easily," replied Ted. "I had the parts made separately in the shop and assembled them here, myself. The hull is supposed to be the fuselage of a new type of electroplane, to which the wings have not yet been attached. The atomotor is assumed to be a model. I fitted it into the hull, myself. As for the degravitors, I had the parts made, assembled them, and fitted the larger ones into the turret, working nights in this room.

"I might add that I have put through an order for ten thousand of the small and a hundred thousand of the large degravitors. Directions for assembling and firing them are in the safe, and you, Roger, will see to it that our soldiers and combat planes are equipped with them as soon as possible.

"But enough of explanations. I must go. If I do not return, you, Roger, will know where to find all of my plans, including those for the degravitors. Use them, and arrange for the defense as best you can, without me."

He entered the turret and switched on a tiny, inner light.

"I have your valuable translations, professor," said Ted, "and hope that I may be able to use them to advantage. Goodbye."

"Goodbye, and good luck," echoed both men as he closed the front of his helmet and slammed and fastened the door of the turret.

They watched him as he slowly elevated the upper forward degravitor. When he pressed the button no visible rays shot forth, but in the metal roof toward which it was aimed there suddenly appeared a clean cut hole which was rapidly widened by circumscribing it with the degravitor rays. The metal did not glow as if burned away, but simply disappeared with a quick, scintillating flash wherever the rays touched it.

When the hole had been enlarged sufficiently, Ted waved a

last adieu. Then his craft rose gracefully, hung for a moment at a point about a thousand feet above the roof, and disappeared with a burst of terrific speed, traveling in a direction which might be reckoned about 80 degrees to the east of the moon in the plane of the ecliptic.

VIII. DEATH RAYS

A WEEK ELAPSED, after the departure of the young inventor, with no word from Ted. During this time, Roger, busy with the duties of the chief executive, ate and slept in the office of his employer.

Professor Ederson had meanwhile tried nightly to get into communication with the Lunites, but without success.

It was on this, the seventh night, that a terrific storm struck Chicago. Unable to sleep because of the howling wind and terrific peals of thunder, Roger switched on the lights and was about to step to the window when his name was called from the disc of the radiovisiphone.

"Mr. Sanders."

He hurried to the instrument and saw the face of the night operator.

"Yes."

"The President of the United States is calling Mr. Dustin. What shall I do?"

"Mr. Dustin is not in," said Roger, who had shared the secret of his employer's absence only with Professor Ederson. "Let me talk to him."

In an instant the face of President Whitmore appeared on the disc. To his intense surprise, Roger noticed that he wore a fur cap and a great fur coat with the collar turned up. That he was in an intensely cold place was indicated by the visibility of his breath as he spoke and exhaled.

"Where is Mr. Dustin?" were his first words on seeing Roger instead of the man he had called.

"He is not here," replied Roger. "As his assistant, can I be of service to you?"

"You have not answered my question," persisted the President. "*Where* is Mr. Dustin?"

"I — I promised not to tell," answered Roger. "He left

here a week ago in the interests of our country and our allies."

The President frowned.

"You forget, Mr. Sanders," he said, "that this is a war emergency, that the country is on a military basis, and that I am Mr. Dustin's superior officer as well as yours. I demand to know where he is."

Roger was nonplussed. He had told everyone that Ted had gone away on business for the country, leaving them to assume what they pleased in the matter. People had, of course, assumed that he had gone to some other city, and would be back shortly. But the President was within his rights in demanding to know where he was. Ted, himself, would not have had the right to refuse this demand.

"He left for the moon a week ago," said Roger, "and I have heard nothing from him since."

"What!"

The President appeared dumfounded.

"How did he go? Who went with him?"

"He went alone in a small interplanetary vehicle of his own invention, knowing that the war would be in full swing before his larger vehicle could be completed.

"Well I'll be damned!" exploded the President. "This is a pretty how d'ye do. Gone just when we need him most."

"I'm sorry," answered Roger, "but he hoped to be able to stop the war by this trip. If there's anything I can do — "

"Maybe there is," said the President, with forced calmness. "Perhaps you can explain some things that I had hoped he could explain. For instance, what is the cause of this intensely cold weather in the middle of the summer, and why does the moonlight appear green?"

"We can't see the moon from here," replied Roger, "and it's not cold. There is a terrific storm raging, plenty of lightning, rain and wind, but no cold."

"A devastating cold wave has spread over this part of the country, affecting Washington and Baltimore, and extending as far south as Richmond," said the President. "The Potomac is frozen solid, and although we have our heating plants going to the utmost capacity, it is impossible to keep

warm. Thousands of people, caught unexpectedly, have perished from the intense cold. My thermometer here in the White House registers 10° above zero. Outside, I am told the thermometers have dropped under 60° below zero, Fahrenheit."

"And you say the moon looks green?"

"As green as grass. The country is bathed in a weird, green light at this moment."

"Must be some connection," mused Roger, "I mean between the green light and the intense cold localized around Washington. Wish Mr. Dustin were here."

"But he isn't," snapped the President, "so see what *you* can find out, and report back, either by radiovisiphone or in person at your earliest convenience. Off!"

As the face of the President disappeared from the disc, Roger slumped down in his chair and lighted a cigarette. What should he do? What could he do?

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in," he said, listlessly.

Professor Ederson entered.

"No use to try to use the radio tonight," he said. "With the unknown interference we have been getting lately and this storm, it would be useless to try to communicate with the moon. I had our operator notify all stations that we wouldn't attempt it tonight."

"Hear about the cold snap in the east?" asked Roger.

"Yes. Got it on the small set just before I came down. Terrible thing, isn't it?"

"And about the green moonlight?"

"Yes. Some new wrinkle of the Lunites, I fancy. They are clever and resourceful and, for all we know, a thousand years ahead of us in scientific knowledge."

"What do you suppose it is?"

"I don't know. An observation might be made from here, seeing that this part of the country is unaffected, if it were not for the raging storm. But it would be suicidal to go up in an electroplane just now."

"If I thought there were anything to be learned, I'd go up," said Roger, "danger or no danger."

"I mentioned it only as a possibility," replied the professor. "The probability is, that if you did learn anything, it would be of no material value, even if you were to be so extremely fortunate as to get back alive with it."

"Nevertheless," replied Roger, "I'm going up, just on the strength of that possibility."

"Don't be an utter fool," warned the professor, but Roger was already calling Bevans.

"Have the Blettendorf 800 ready in five minutes," he said. "I'll be up in a jiffy."

He dressed rapidly while the professor remonstrated with him.

"No use," said Roger, "I'm going."

"Very well," replied the professor. "If you must go I'll go with you. Perhaps the two of us can bring back some information of value — if we get back."

They took the elevator to the top, stepped out on the roof, and battled their way through the driving rain, in which there was beginning to be a hint of sleet, to the electroplane. Eight men held it, just outside the hangar, while Bevans, in the pilot's seat, tested the motor.

The two men entered and took their seats. Then Roger gave the order to ascend. Came a roar from the helicopter blades, and they were off.

As they rose above the skyscrapers of Chicago, their craft tossing and careening like a leaf in a gale, Roger took two parcels from beneath the seat, one of which he handed to the professor.

"Folding parachutes," he said. "Bevans is wearing one. Watch how I strap mine on, and do likewise. We may need them."

The wind swept them out over Lake Michigan — then they plunged into a swirling, blinding snowstorm, and everything below, even the powerful guide-lights of Chicago's great landing fields, vanished.

With propeller and helicopter blades roaring, Bevans drove the plane higher and higher, until they at length emerged above the seething, moon-silvered clouds.

"No green moonlight here," said the professor.

"But look — look to the southeast!" exclaimed Roger.

The professor looked, and saw a green band of light, wide at the bottom, but narrowing as it extended upward straight toward the gibbous moon.

"The moon looks green from Washington," said the professor, "because the inhabitants had to look through the green lights to see it."

Roger shouted an order through the speaking tube.

"Hover."

As the big plane, now riding in comparatively calm air, hung smoothly suspended by its helicopter blades, he turned a pair of powerful binoculars on the moon. He focused them, looked for a moment longer, then handed them to the professor.

"It's coming from the ring-mountain, Copernicus," he said. "Looks as if a beam from an enormous green searchlight were coming directly from the center of the crater."

"So it is," said the professor, after a careful scrutiny. "From the very center of the crater."

Then, before he had lowered the glasses, the green light winked out. So sudden was the transformation, and so calm and natural did the moon appear, that it seemed to both observers that the thing had not really been — that it was a figment of their imaginations.

Came a call from Bevans:

"Three strange craft on the starboard quarter, sir. They seem to be coming this way."

The professor trained the binoculars in the direction indicated.

"My word, what odd looking craft," he exclaimed. "They are globular in form — globes, to each of which two whirling discs are attached."

"An International Patrol Plane is coming from the port quarter," called Bevans. "It's signaling the three strange craft, but they do not respond. They are running without lights."

"Ascend," called Roger, "and turn off all lights."

There was an answering roar as the Blettendorf shot upward.

"Too late for that," said the professor. "We must have been seen."

As the two men watched the one sided aerial parley below, they saw two more Patrol Planes emerge from the upper cloud stratum and take places behind the first.

"That makes the numbers even, at least," said Roger.

The two squadrons drew together without sign or signal from the strange craft, until the two leaders were within two thousand feet of each other. Then a narrow green ray suddenly shot out from the foremost globe, striking the first patrol plane. For a moment the plane seemed to shrink — to draw together as if crushed in from all sides. Then it crumbled asunder, and the pieces fell into the swirling clouds beneath.

The forward turret guns of the two remaining planes immediately went into action, concentrating their fire on the foremost globe, but with no apparent effect. Green rays shot out from the two other globes simultaneously, and the planes shared the fate of their leader.

Then a green ray from the first globe sailed upward.

"Jump!" shouted Roger. "It's our only chance. They'll find us in a minute."

The professor tore the door open and jumped first. His parachute opened just as Roger leaped after him followed by Bevans.

Roger could not see upward because of the parachute spread above him, but fragments of the shattered Blettendorf began falling around him before he had dropped far, and he was thankful that they had leaped in time.

Looking downward to see how it fared with the professor, he saw to his horror that the linguist was falling directly onto one of the globes.

Then he shot past the same globe himself, heard the hum of its rapidly whirling discs, and dropped into the enveloping grayness of the raging storm clouds beneath.

IX. VICIOUS PLANT

ON LEAVING the metal shed which had housed his one-man vehicle, Ted Dustin hovered for a moment to get his bear-

ings — then shot away from the earth at such speed that his exterior thermometer registered a terrific heat from the shell of his craft before five seconds had elapsed. Forced to slacken his speed because of the danger of crippling his machine, he proceeded at a more leisurely pace until his instruments told him he was entirely out of the earth's atmosphere.

Once assured of this, he set his meteroid detector — an extremely sensitive magnetic instrument which registered the approach of all meteoric masses, automatically repelling the smaller ones by blasts from the exhaust of the atomotor, and driving the craft away from those of greater mass. He next set his automatic course correcter, which was designed to throw the machine back on its course after each forced deviation. Then he set the motor for full speed ahead.

To his surprise and satisfaction he found, on glancing at the magnetic speedometer, that the little untested motor was driving the craft almost twice as fast as he had anticipated. He would thus, barring accidents, be able to reach the moon in a day and a half instead of the three days he had previously allowed himself for the undertaking. This necessitated the setting of a new course, as he would otherwise have arrived at the moon's path just a day and a half ahead of that satellite.

Having made his calculations and adjusted his instruments accordingly, he opened his visor, swallowed a concentrated food pellet, drank a cup of hot coffee from the thermos tank, and lighted his black briar. Finding the cabin uncomfortably cold with his visor open, he drew up an extra set of glass panels all around and turned on his atomic heater. Then he studied the translations of the professor, hoping that he might thus learn enough of the Lunite writing to form a basis for intelligent communication.

When the first hour had elapsed he looked back at the earth, which appeared as an enormous, semi-luminous globe set in a black sky, its seas and continents faintly defined by the light of the full moon. The disc of the sun remained hidden behind the earth, but other heavenly bodies were far brighter in appearance, shining from this black sky, than he had ever seen them appear from on earth.

As the hours passed and the apparent size of the earth grew less while that of the moon grew correspondingly greater, he was surprised at not having encountered a single meteor. Presently, after about twelve hours of travel, one caused the craft to swerve, and he noticed wtih satisfaction that the automatic course correcter functioned perfectly.

He swallowed another food pellet, sipped his coffee, and tried to sleep, but despite the fact that he had trained himself to take rest or go without it as the occasion required, he found sleep out of the question. The excitement of his thrilling race with the earth's satellite was too much for that. He could scarcely bear to close his eyes for a moment, for looking and wondering.

Before he realized it, twenty-four hours had slipped by. The shrinking shape of the earth was now on his left — the silver disc of the moon, with craters, hills and valleys, was now plainly visible to the naked eye, on his right. He was traveling with his keel in the plane of the ecliptic. As he progressed, the prow leaned more and more toward the moon's north pole.

The last twelve hours were packed with wonders, thrills, and dangers. Previously he had encountered only a relatively few meteoroids. Now, he found they traveled in swarms in and near the neutral gravity point between moon and earth. His craft swerved this way and that — dropped — or shot suddenly upward, as huge masses of meteoric matter hurtled dangerously near it. He caught fleeting glimpses of these desultory travelers, some of them almost perfectly spherical, others jagged lumps of rock and metal — grim remnants of some planetary or planetoidal tragedy of the past.

With the neutral gravity point well past and the moon directly beneath his keel, the danger from meteoroids was considerably lessened. The delays were more than compensated for by the increasing pull of the moon itself.

His goal almost realized, Ted's next problem was to decide where to land. Copernicus, plainly visible to the north east with its brilliant yellow ray system, and Tycho, to the south, with its still more dazzling white rays branching out

in all directions, were the two most conspicuous objects on the lunar landscape.

Although his purpose was to find the belligerent ruler, P'an-ku, his only hint as to his whereabouts was the probability that the crater, Hipparchus, was somewhere within the limits of that worth's empire, which might be as extensive as the moon itself, or confined to a relatively small area. The thing to do, he decided, was to land at Hipparchus and investigate.

As he approached the great ring-mountain, Ted saw no signs of life. The damage wrought by his projectile, however, was evident — for in the center of the huge, enclosed plain, gaped a jagged black hole fully five miles in diameter, while the interior of the crater was strewn with jagged rock debris, some of the larger fragments the size of a terrestrial city block. Of the city of Ur, mentioned in the radio message, he saw no sign whatever. Greatly puzzled, he slowly circled the crater, then crossed the rim and set out in a widening spiral, flying only a few thousand feet above the ground, looking for some sign of a human being or habitation.

Although there had been no sign of vegetation in the enormous crater which had been laid waste by his projectile, Ted now began to notice signs of lunar forests and meadows. Flying slowly at an altitude of two hundred feet, he passed over level areas covered with velvety stretches of gray vegetation that resembled mosses and lichens, and over hills and valleys clothed with forests of weird, grotesque growths.

There were fungi shaped like saucers, umbrellas, cones, spearheads, and even upraised hands, all rusty black in color. There were black stalks, fully fifty feet in height, topped by five-pointed purple stars, huge gray pear-shaped growths from which there curled sinuous branches that resembled the tentacles of cuttle fish, and black trees, some of which were a hundred feet in height, with branches that unrolled like the leaves of sword-ferns.

Disposed to view some of these wonders at closer range, Ted lowered his craft to the ground. A glance at his exterior thermometer showed the outside temperature to be 210° above zero, Fahrenheit, almost the boiling point of water at

sea level on earth! He accordingly closed his visor and turned on the valve of his insulated compressed air tank before opening the door of his turret. Slamming this quickly behind him, he stepped down from his craft, sinking ankle deep in the soft, gray moss that coated the forest floor.

As the suit he wore protected him from either extreme heat or cold he was able to maintain a normal body temperature, but the comparatively slight gravitational pull of the earth's satellite gave him an uncanny freedom of motion. His first incautious step shot him ten feet in the air and landed him, with startling suddenness, face downward in a tangle of black creepers fully twenty feet from where he had started. Instinctively he scrambled erect and was as suddenly precipitated on his back at a distance of fifteen feet in the opposite direction. This time he arose slowly, stepped forward with great care, and found himself able to progress after a somewhat jerky fashion.

Having thus, to a degree, mastered the art of walking on the moon, he took the opportunity to observe the queer vegetation around him. To his intense surprise, he saw that it was growing *visibly!* Although the rates of growth varied in different plants, he could see that all were swelling and elongating with amazing rapidity. Watching an umbrella shaped fungus which was on a level with his eyes, he calculated that it was growing taller at the rate of a foot an hour! The black, fern-like branches of a great tree unrolled and enlarged before his eyes. Spore pods beneath the leaves, swelled and burst, scattering tiny dust-like particles which floated about, or settled on the surrounding vegetation, rocks and soil. A tall, black and gray fungus opened its gills, releasing a cloud of silver spores that glittered in the sunlight like mica dust.

Ted was attracted by the movements of the tentacles of an octopus-like plant a short distance ahead of him, and walked toward it. They writhed and twisted like the snakey locks of a Medusa, yet the roots which held the pear-shaped trunk showed the vegetable nature of the monstrosity. Prompted by a rash curiosity, he had no sooner arrived beside the grotesque anomaly than he grasped one of the slithering branches, expecting, from its slimy appearance, to find

it soft and yielding. To his surprise and dismay it suddenly coiled around his forearm with a grip as firm and unyielding as the loops of a steel cable. He was jerked off his feet, straight toward a black, horny lipped opening of triangular shape, which yawned at the top of the pear-shaped body.

Instinctively, he reached with his free hand for his pistol degravitor, but too late. A score or more of tough, unyielding tentacles bound his arms to his sides and circled his body with such force that his bones would have been instantly crushed and his flesh reduced to pulp had it not been for the metal plates of his protective armor. Even these creaked, and seemed about to give way, as he was drawn, head downward, into the yawning, spike-toothed opening.

X. ABDUCTION

As he plunged into the awful death trap, Ted noticed that, for a moment, the sun was darkened above him and there was a sound which resembled the whistling of giant pinions. Then came the click of enormous teeth against the armor which covered his thighs, and blackness.

The powerful tentacles had released their hold on his arms and the upper part of his body, but their place was instantly supplanted by the walls of the huge, vegetable craw which exerted even greater pressure. He wondered if the digestive juices of the plant would be corrosive enough to quickly penetrate his protective suit, or if a long, lingering death awaited him — a death which, even though the suit held, was bound to come as soon as his supply of air gave out.

Hanging there in stygian solitude, unable to move a finger, Ted was suddenly startled at sight of a brilliant ray of red light which cut the darkness near his face. It blinded him temporarily, but when he could use his eyes once more he was astonished to see that the lower wall of his vegetable tomb had practically disappeared, while the bright, red ray, flashing intermittently, consumed the blackened edges still further with puffs of smoke and flame.

Here, he judged, was some human agency. Here was hope of rescue, for the red ray, thus far, had not touched him. He could now move his head and shoulders, but dared not do

so for fear of intercepting the red ray with disastrous results.

The ray ate its way slowly upward beside one of his arms. It was free. A moment, and the other was loosed. Then the jaws relaxed their hold on his thighs and he slid down into the charred, jelly-like remains of the oval body, of which now only half the wall was standing. Two arms were slipped beneath his own, helping him to rise. Then he turned and faced his rescuer.

Prepared as he was for almost any sight, Ted gasped in amazement when he beheld the person who had saved his life, for standing before him in a suit of soft, clinging white fur resembling astrachan, her head encased in a helmet of bell-shaped glass, was the gloriously beautiful girl he had seen in the disc of the radiovisiphone — the girl who had called herself *"Maza an Ma Gong."* In her right hand was a short, tubular instrument which greatly resembled a flash-light, and which he judged was the weapon that had compassed his freedom.

As he could not speak to her he was trying to think of a way to express his gratitude for his unexpected rescue while she smiled encouragingly, when he suddenly noticed a most fearful creature behind her. It resembled nothing living that he had ever seen or heard of, but was strikingly like pictures he had seen of winged dragons — pictures he had always previously imagined were due solely to the imagination of medieval artists.

Believing the girl in dire peril, he whipped out both pistol degravitors and was about to destroy the beast when she struck down his weapons with a look of alarm. Then, beckoning the thing with her hand she stood, unafraid, while the hideous creature stretched forth its scrawny, scaly neck and laid its ugly, armor-plated muzzle on her shoulder. She fondled it for a moment, scratching its horny nose while it closed its eyes and laid back its short ears as if greatly pleased by these attentions. Then she pushed the head away and turned once more to the amazed young scientist.

As she stood there beside him he noticed for the first time that what he had taken for a plume, resembling an aigrette and protruding through the top of her glass helmet was, in

reality, a group of fine, metallic radio antennae. The small set which they operated was evidently attached just beneath them — shaped like and no larger than his own wrist radiophone.

He wished that he had had the foresight to attach a similar contrivance to his own outfit, but since he had not, he found it necessary to resort to more primitive means for making himself heard.

Taking the girl lightly by the shoulders, and thereby eliciting a look of startled surprise from her, he bent over and placed the glass of his helmet against hers, an expedient which had been much in use among deep sea divers for making themselves intelligible to each other before the advent of under water radio sets.

"Thank you, Maza an Ma Gong, for saving my life," he said.

She smiled and replied:

"Di tcha-tsi, Ted Dustin."

Recalling that *"tcha-tsi"* had something to do with a challenge to war, he was somewhat puzzled, yet her attitude was quite peaceful. She continued to smile, and pointed toward the great hulking beast behind her.

"Nak-kar," she said, then pointed to herself and continued: *"Uma nak-kar."*

The beast, at this moment, lowered its head to crop some moss, and let its wings, which had been folded across its back, droop slightly, displaying a most comfortable looking, highbacked seat strapped to its back. He judged, therefore, that the lady was telling him this was her palfrey — truly a most hideous one.

He led her to the spot where he had cached his interplanetary vehicle, while the great beast lumbered meekly after her, pointed to the craft and, with his helmet against hers, said:

"Ship." Then, pointing to himself: "My ship."

When she seemed not to understand, he said: *"Uma nak-kar."*

She nodded understandingly, and both laughed.

He opened the door and helped her into the small cab. Then stepping in himself and sharing the revolving seat with her, he

closed it and took her for a short ride above the trees — or the growths which answered for trees on that weird landscape. She was as excited as a child, and clapped her hands with glee as they soared, and did several stunts, finally landing as lightly as a feather.

As he helped her from the cab she stood on tiptoes so her helmet touched his, and said: *"Um nak-kari na Ultu."* As she spoke she pointed first to her mount, then toward the east. Then: "Ted Dustin *nak-kari na Ultu."*

Although he did not know the meaning of all her words, he felt that he understood what she wanted. She seemed to take it for granted that he did, for springing lightly into her saddle she struck the shoulder of the great winged monster with her gloved palm, whereupon it ran, sprawling clumsily for fifty feet or so with wings outspread, then took to the air in which it seemed quite at home and flapped lazily eastward.

He hurried to his vehicle as he did not want to lose sight of her, entered, closed the door, and pressed the starter lever. To his surprise and alarm it did not respond. He pressed it again with the same negative result. Then he remembered that he had carelessly left the door open for several minutes. The interior of the cab had thus been exposed to the terrific heat of the lunar surface. Unscrewing the top of the starter he instantly saw the cause of his trouble. A connection, on which he had hastily used wax instead of solder and tape, had melted, breaking the circuit. Several minutes elapsed before he could make the temporary repair, using his temperature equalizer, meanwhile, to cool the cab.

Once more he pressed the starter, the atomotor responded, and he rose high in the air in order that he might quickly locate the girl and her strange steed. He saw her instantly, about a mile east of his position. Her mount, he noticed, was flapping forward with greater speed than before, and high above it was a globe circled by two transverse belts, and to which were fastened two whirling discs, oppositely placed. Suddenly the globe swooped downward like a falcon on its prey.

As he darted forward he saw a tiny red ray shoot upward from the hand of the girl. It struck one of the belts of the

descending craft, and sparks and smoke flew out from the spot. Then a green ray shot out from the globe, crossing the red ray. At the point where they crossed both rays disappeared and the sparks and smoke from the craft ceased. Then another green ray flashed out from the globe, striking one of the wings of the monster. The wing seemed to shrivel — then broke in pieces, and the beast fell, fluttering wildly with its remaining wing until it crashed with its rider into a tall forest of black-stemmed purple star plants.

While he watched this unequal battle, which lasted only a few seconds, Ted had been hurtling forward at terrific speed. Just as the girl fell, he shot between her and the attacking globe, narrowly missing one of the green rays which still extended downward. Bringing his vehicle about, he trained his forward degravitor on the descending globe and pressed the button.

Although no visible ray leaped out, the effect on the globe was readily apparent, for it flashed where it had struck, then gaped wide as the degravitor rays cut a tunnel through it.

A green ray instantly flashed back in retaliation, striking Ted's prow and breaking it into fragments. His craft then did a nose dive which he was powerless to prevent, the forward exhaust pipes of the atomotor having been cut away. It buried itself in a cluster of the huge purple star plants, so thick that they shut out the light of day.

As he had not strapped himself to his seat, Ted landed on his instrument board when the craft struck, and laid there for several moments in a semi-stupor, the breath knocked from his body. Presently, his breath returning in short gasps, he found himself able to rise and force the door part way open. A black stem of one of the star-like plants blocked it, but he cut this away at the base with his pistol degravitor, waited until it crashed among its fellows, and then stepped out to freedom, this time remembering to close the door after him.

After leaping to the ground, he looked about him, trying to orient himself in the darkness. Here and there faint glimmers of light showed between black trunks, but there was nothing to give him even a hint of directions. He started for

the light spot directly ahead of him as it looked the brightest and probably issued from the largest open space.

Treading noiselessly over the soft gray moss which grew between the closely packed black trunks, he presently reached the clearing from which the light had issued. It was but a small opening in the forest, and it seemed to him that something more than chance had directed his footsteps as he saw the girl standing at bay with her red ray projector in her hand before a short, round-bodied individual clad in yellow fur and wearing a glass and copper helmet shaped, at the top, like a pagoda.

The two were fencing, but not with blades of steel. They fenced with something infinitely more destructive, for as the girl sought to reach her antagonist with the red ray he warded it off with a green ray from a small projector which he held in his hand, and in turn, menaced her with his weapon while she parried with the red ray.

Near her lay the remains of her huge mount, now a mere hulk of flesh, with head, neck and one wing gone.

Drawing a pistol degravitor, Ted leveled it at the wielder of the green ray and pulled the trigger. It was aimed at his head, which instantly disappeared, the torso slipping to the ground with the green ray projector still clasped in the lifeless hand. The ray struck the base of a giant star-tree, which shriveled at the bottom, then crashed to the ground. Another and another instantly shared its fate, falling only a second or two apart, but in these Ted was not interested.

He was about to disclose himself to the astonished girl when two long, lean arms clad in yellow fur suddenly reached out from the clump of fern like growths behind her and jerked her backward. Her red ray winked once, then went out, and Ted leaped forward to her assistance. He managed to follow by means of the trail of trampled and broken vegetation left by her abductors. Presently he reached another clearing just in time to see her hustled aboard the globe which had attacked her some time before, by two yellow-clad Lunites.

The globe, he now saw, was of yellow metal. The two transverse belts he had seen from a distance proved to be

combination ladders and bridges. A man could walk around the one which happened to be horizontal, or climb the one which happened to be vertical, using the supporting bars of the railing for ladder rounds.

Projecting from the two points where these belts crossed were shaft housings, on the end of each of which were the discs he had previously noticed. The faces of both discs resembled brightly polished mirrors, one convex, the other concave.

Just above and below the lines traced by the bridges were rows of diamond shaped, glassed openings which he judged answered as port holes. There was a diamond shaped door on the side of the craft nearest him, and it was into this that the girl was thrust by her two captors, while Ted stood helpless, unable to use his weapons for fear of harming her.

One of the men closed the door after them. Then both discs started whirling. The craft began to rise, and Ted bounded forward, just in time to grasp a round of one of the ladders as it cleared the ground. Climbing quickly up beneath the whirling concave disc, he stepped onto the bridge and crouched there, to be out of sight from the port holes and to plan his next move.

There were only two ways for him to enter the craft. He must either cut a hole with his pistol degravitor or go in through the hole which he had cut with his large degravitor before his craft fell. This hole was high up in the shell of the globe and could only be reached by climbing the belt ladder, then sliding down the smooth shell until the hole was reached. It was a hazardous undertaking in more ways than one, with scant hope of success. First, he stood little chance of being able to climb the ladder without being seen from one of the ports. That he had reached his present position undetected was little short of a miracle.

Then, should he be able to reach the proper position unseen, sliding down the shell was a most uncertain and perilous thing to do. There was nothing to cling to, and the chances were ten to one that he would miss the hole he was striving to reach.

But assuming that he should reach the hole, there was

every probability still against him. Undoubtedly, a dozen green ray projectors would instantly be turned on him, ending his career without accomplishing his purpose.

True, he might cut his way into the craft with his pistol degravitor, but this would endanger the girl. For all he knew, she might, at that very moment, be separated from him only by the shell of the craft which he had thought of cutting, and an inch or two of air. She might be at any point in the craft through which he should elect to cut his way.

Looking through the bars of the railing, he saw that they were sailing swiftly over the very spot where he had come near to losing his life to the flesh-eating plant only a short time before, and were headed eastward. A moment more and they passed over the rugged rim of the great ring-mountain, Hipparchus. The craft dipped as they passed over the barren, debris-strewn inner plain. Were they headed for the destroyed city of Ur? And would others of their kind be there to meet them? If so, he must act quickly.

Abandoning all caution, he sprang up the ladder. He expected, at every step, that a green ray would shoot out from one of the port holes and destroy him, and was surprised when he found himself sitting on top of the craft, alive and unharmed. On his right, about ten feet below him, was the hole through which his degravitor ray had come out. On his left, approximately eighteen feet below him, was the hole where it had entered, cutting a slanting tunnel through the globe. Just above this hole was a jagged streak of partly cut metal caused by his quick, unconscious elevation of the degravitor gun just before his craft fell. This streak reached almost to where he clung to the ladder, and looked as if it might afford a means of descent. It was, at least, less slippery than the smooth, coppery sides of the globe, the metal having been honeycombed in the path of the ray as if eaten by acid.

Stretching himself prone, Ted sought and found holds for his gloved fingers in the pitted metal and began the descent, head first. He had covered a third of the distance when he suddenly noticed a dark wall looming beside him. Looking around, he saw that the craft had plunged into the great black

hole which had been torn in the crater floor of Hipparchus by his interplanetary projectile.

As the wall hurtled past him he caught glimpses here and there of tunnel-like openings, some quite large, all partly choked with debris. There came the realization that he must act quickly, as a landing would probably be made here, so he turned resolutely to his task of reaching the hole.

His fingers had barely gripped the edge of the opening by which he expected to enter, when the globe slowed down and came to an abrupt stop. He slipped from his position, but caught one arm over the edge of the opening and managed to keep from falling. Quickly drawing himself up, he crawled inside the craft. He was in a small upper chamber lighted by the diamond shaped port holes above. It had been abandoned.

On the floor lay the partly destroyed bodies which had been struck by his degravitor ray. He found a trap door and opening it, discovered a ladder which led to a room below. He judged, from the array of levers and buttons, that it was the pilot's room, but found it also untenanted. Opening a diamond shaped door in the rear of this room, he suddenly came upon a score of Lunites who were passing, single file, out of a side door. All were armed with their deadly ray projectors, but they were as much taken by surprise as he. Drawing both pistol degravitors with lightning quickness, he raked the line from both ends toward the middle before a single green ray projector could be brought to bear on him.

One Lunite only, quicker than the others, escaped by leaping through the door. The others fell, a huddled heap of human remains.

Quickly bounding to the door, Ted stepped out on the bridge, then ducked just in time to avoid a green flash. Aiming through the bars of the railing he destroyed the man who had projected it.

The craft had landed before the explosion-scarred remains of an immense edifice, the portico of which was supported by gigantic human figures cut from brown stone. In lieu of steps leading into the building there was an inclined ramp, the beautiful tile pattern of which showed here and there between heaps and fragments of debris.

Hurrying up this ramp were three figures, and he saw that the one in the center who was being dragged forward by the others, was Maza an Ma Gong. Not daring to use his weapons for fear of striking the girl, he leaped from the bridge to the ground, then started out in pursuit just as the three disappeared inside the building.

XI. CAVERNS OF THE MOON

IT ONLY took Ted a moment to reach the huge diamond shaped door through which the girl and her two abductors had disappeared, but when he entered it there was no one in sight.

He found himself in an immense room, the ceiling of which was supported by carved figures scarcely less colossal than the ones which held up the portico. They represented huge, bandy-legged, round-bodied Lunites, with enormous heads and scrawny arms. The walls were shelved clear to the top, and the shelves were piled high with thousands of metal cylinders, varying in their diameters from two to about eight inches, but uniformly about fifteen inches in length. A few ornate ladders, the gilded sides of which represented lean-bodied dragons, stood against the walls, but many had fallen to the floor as had a number of the cylinders.

Great cracks and breaches here and there in the walls showed the devastating effects of the explosion of his projectile, as did a considerable quantity of fallen plaster and stone.

The place was lighted by an indirect yellow radiance which came from the tops of the heads of the colossi, and was reflected by the glossy ceiling.

Sprawled and huddled here and there on the floor were a great number of bodies of fallen Lunites. They were surrounded by great swarms of insects, and he judged from the appearance of those nearest him that they were in an advanced state of putrefaction. As he glanced around, he saw a huge gray creature, rat-like in appearance, but as large as a full grown Shetland pony, dart through one of the breaches

in the wall, seize a body, and quickly carry it back whence it had come.

The bodies, he noticed, were clothed in loose-fitting garments which slightly resembled pajamas, and the massive heads were not covered with glass helmets as had been those of the Lunites in the spherical craft he had just quitted. Evidently these were the bodies of a few of the people of Ur who had been slain by the explosion of his projectile.

Ted gave slight heed to all these sights as he looked this way and that in the hope of seeing Maza an Ma Gong and her abductors. That they could not have traversed the length of the great hall in so short a time was obvious. They might, however, have been able to slip through the nearest breach in the wall before he reached the doorway.

As he bounded forward to investigate this possibility, his path led him past one of the colossi. Without warning, a deadly green ray suddenly flashed from behind one of the gigantic limbs. As it struck the helmet of the young scientist he instinctively pointed and fired a pistol degravitor in the direction whence it had come. There was a flash of brilliant green light, a terrific pain in his head, and he crashed to the floor, the glass of his helmet tinkling on the hard tiles. Then came oblivion.

How long he lay unconscious on the floor of the huge, subterranean building, Ted had no means of estimating. He awoke with a dull headache and the feeling that something was crushing him — bearing down on his body and limbs with terrific force.

Raising his head to investigate, he cut his chin on the jagged remnant of his shattered glass visor before he was able to see what was lying across him — a number of pieces of what appeared to be broken plaster. After considerable effort he managed to work his arms free and unscrew the now useless collar of his helmet, with its menacing glass fragments.

The air of the place, he noticed, was fairly cool and practically as dense as the atmosphere of the earth — a condition far different from that on the surface of the moon, where the atmosphere was extremely tenuous and the heat of the lunar mid-day far too great for the existence of unprotected

men. It was good, he thought, to be able to breathe outside a glass helmet once more, even though the air was laden with unpleasant charnel odors.

Five minutes of exhausting labor freed his body and lower limbs from the heavy fragments which pinned them to the floor. When he rose to survey the scene the cause of the fall of plaster was immediately apparent. His degravitator ray, fired in the direction from which the green ray, which had destroyed the top of his helmet, had come, had cut away the base of the supporting colossus behind which his assailant had been concealed, and this had crashed to the floor, carrying with it a considerable portion of the plastered ceiling which it had supported.

Beside a leg of the image he saw the remains of a Lunite, partly destroyed by his degravitor ray — probably his attacker. Beneath the leg was the crushed, dead body of another Lunite, but of Maza an Ma Gong he saw no sign. Had she escaped, leaving him for dead beneath the heap of plaster? Or did her slender body lie crushed and bleeding under the fallen statue?

Filled with apprehension, he walked clear around the prostrate image without seeing a sign of her whom he sought. Then he was startled to hear his name called: "Ted Dustin. Ted Dustin." It was the voice of Maza, and seemed to issue from the colossus. He leaped astride the giant body, seeking some hollow which might explain the enigma, but it was not until he had stepped out on one of the huge thighs that he saw the girl. She was imprisoned on the floor in the hollow between the two enormous knees.

Drawing a pistol degravitor, he found it but the work of a moment to cut away enough of one of the huge legs to free the girl.

The fact that she was unhurt, he judged little short of miraculous, but whether it was due to chance or to her own dexterity he had no means of finding out. She had the front of her helmet open, and he noticed that the antennae of her miniature radiophone were smashed.

As soon as she was free she picked up a green ray projector which one of the Lunites had dropped, and started

for the door, beckoning him to follow. They had barely reached the ramp when Ted heard a great clatter behind them and the sound of running feet. Turning, he saw a horde of armed men rushing through an archway in the rear of the building. Instead of glass helmets and furry clothing, these men wore metal helmets and plate armor, and carried, in addition to their ray projectors, long swords, and spears with heads like long-toothed buzz saws.

With his degravitors leveled in two lethal arcs, Ted cut down the foremost ranks of the attackers and gave the others pause. Evidently they were dumfounded at the sight of weapons that fired invisible rays. While they hesitated he caught up his companion, and turning, bounded down the tiled ramp with mighty fifty foot leaps that amazed them still more, crossed a circular plaza over which were scattered indiscriminately, rock debris, fallen and broken statuary, and dead bodies, many of which were partly devoured, and dodged in among the remains of a fallen colossus.

The clank of arms and accoutrements became increasingly audible, and Ted turned to see if any of their pursuers were in sight. At that moment his foot encountered empty air, and he fell, dragging his companion with him, into a steeply slanting tunnel which was about four feet in diameter at the mouth.

Sliding and tumbling, the two at length brought up against the wall of a transverse passageway which slanted downward to their left.

A shout and the clatter of weapons from the ground above brought Ted quickly to his feet. Helping his companion to arise, he took her hand and the two hurried down the inclined ramp. They had not covered more than a hundred feet before the way grew dark and the tunnel tortuous, so they were forced to proceed with the utmost caution. They felt their way along in the inky blackness for some time. Presently all sounds save those of their own footsteps ceased. Then Ted was suddenly and temporarily blinded by a glare of light. When his eyes had become accustomed to it, he saw that it came from a small lens fastened in his companion's

helmet just above her forehead. Evidently she had not turned it on before for the sake of caution.

Then it was the girl who became the leader in their flight. As they encountered a labyrinth of passageways, she would turn now to the right, now to the left, always following the ramps which slanted downward, and Ted saw her glance from time to time at queer Lunite symbols painted on the walls, which evidently marked the way.

Presently she switched off her light, and Ted noticed that there was a strange, phosphorescent luminescence in the passageway ahead of them. Its source became apparent when they suddenly emerged from the end of the tunnel into a wide lane which wound through a thick grove of tall straight plants that appeared to Ted like gigantic shoots of asparagus painted with phosphorus. They varied from a thickness of six inches to well over three feet at the base, and some of the tallest towered fully seventy feet into the air. The light they gave off was quite as brilliant as the full moon appears from the earth, and was reflected by myriads of gleaming, white stalactites depending from an arched vault far above them. Stalagmites, also, gleamed here and there among the shining plants, and the lane or road which they were following was evidently made from the same white material crushed into small fragments and rolled smooth.

Suddenly the girl grasped Ted's arm, and pulling him in among the tall, luminous trunks, secreted herself behind one of the larger ones and motioned him to do likewise.

Scarcely had he followed her example, ere there came to his ears a cracking, rumbling sound. Then, from around the bend in the lane, there waddled a huge, hulking creature of most fearsome aspect. Ted had seen pictures of wingless Chinese dragons, and this ugly vision, now less than fifty feet from him, was one of those pictures immensely magnified — for it was as tall as a camel and three times as long. Just in front of its spiny crest and behind its relatively small ears, a round bodied Lunite was perched on its massive head. Luminous vapor issued from its nostrils at intervals of a few seconds, and the myriad scales that covered its long, twisting body, as well as its thousands of sharp dorsal spines, re-

flected the phosphorescent light of the forest that bordered the lane.

This ugly monster straddled a long pole with its four bowed legs, the front end of which was attached to a U shaped collar that circled its scaly neck, and the rear end of which was fastened to a long chain of creaking, bumping carts, fastened together by hooks and rings. Each of these carts traveled on two large rollers in lieu of wheels, and contained many metal cylinders which jolted and banged together as the vehicle lumbered along.

Walking beside the cart on each side was a long row of Lunites clad in sandals and coarse, loose fitting tunics that reached to the knees. The long black hair of these workmen was twisted up in a pointed, pagoda-like effect on top of the head. Each man carried a two handled metal urn, a short tube pointed at one end like a quill, and a small mallet.

Behind the first dragon came two others, similarly harnessed and attended, and Ted, noticing that the last dragon snatched from time to time at the shoots of the luminous plants which grew by the roadside, munching each phosphorescent mouthful with apparent relish, saw the reason these creatures appeared to breathe fire. It was some time later that he learned this was a crew of sap gatherers, returning with a supply of cylinders filled with the luminous fluid with which the Lunite chemists made the yellow, light-emitting liquid which, suspended in transparent containers, lighted their underground cities.

When the cavalcade had passed out of sight down the road the girl motioned him to rise, and together they resumed their flight. They passed many cross-lanes in the luminous forest, unmolested. Then the one on which they were traveling came to an end.

The cultivated area now gave way to an immense tangle of luminous and non-luminous plants of various hues and shades — a tremendous hodge podge of winding creepers, low fungi of every conceivable shape, and tall trunks, jointed, smooth, and spiny — some topped like mushrooms, spears, stars or globes, others with long waving fronts like palms or ferns.

Most of the non-luminous plants were white, although some were gray or black. Here and there among the common phosphorescent types of luminous plants were scattered groups and individuals which gave off red, green, pink, violet or yellow light. Some of them emitted two or three shades of one color, or even several colors of light. The whole scene was a vast, weird, fairyland of color and shade — at once, beautiful and forbidding.

Into this tangle the girl plunged without the slightest hesitation. Ted followed, a pistol degravitor in his hand ready for instant action.

As they progressed further and further into this subterranean wilderness the fauna of the place became more and more in evidence, indicating to Ted that, if one might judge from the conduct of the wild things, they were gradually receding from the haunts of man.

From the shadows many pairs of burning eyes glared out at them. Small animals, sensing their approach, scurried hastily from their pathway. Featherless birds, or winged reptiles — Ted did not know which to call them — flitted among the branches above their heads. Larger ones, some of them appearing huge enough to have flown off with elephants, soared far up near the vaulted roof or flapped lazily back and forth above the tree-tops, evidently in search of prey. Some of them had luminous body areas which gleamed dully as they flew, but flashed from time to time from crests, throats, or wing-tips like the display of a swarm of fireflies magnified ten thousand fold.

There were luminous insects and worms, also, of various shades — and luminous serpents coiled on boles and branches, some of them flashing crests or tail-tips when disturbed as if to warn an intruder of their dangerous presence.

The air was filled with a cacophonous medley of roars, bellows, croaks, shrieks, growls and hisses, sometimes interspersed with more melodious warbling, whistling or bell-like tones.

At times huge monsters, most of them dragon-like dinosaurs, crashed fearlessly through the jungle, pausing now and again to crop herbage or devour huge mouthfuls of luminous

fungus, and exhaling great clouds of phosphorescent vapor that hung like wraiths in the still air above their enormous heads.

And everywhere was a dank, musty odor as if mold and matches had been mixed with stagnant water and brewed in a cauldron over a slow fire.

Presently they emerged from the jungle into a broad savanna of white, jointed grass with luminous tips, that reached to Ted's shoulders. They walked side by side, now, and Ted noticed that the girl often glanced at a small instrument clamped on her wrist — evidently a compass.

For a moment his attention was distracted by a pair of enormous creatures, each well over fifty feet in height, browsing leisurely not more than a quarter of a mile to his right. Then a fearful thing happened.

Ted's first intimation of it was the whistle of giant pinions just behind him. Then something struck the back of his head, knocking him flat on his face.

He scrambled to his feet and quickly brought up his pistol degravitor as he saw the girl, already far above the ground, struggling in the talons of a mighty flying reptile. His finger trembled on the trigger yet he did not pull it, for there suddenly came to him the realization that to destroy the monster would be to as surely kill the girl. A fall from that great height would have crushed her frail body to a pulp.

The creature flew with terrific speed, and in a moment, had disappeared from view with its prey.

Dejectedly, Ted holstered his degravitor. His downward glance fell on the green ray projector which the girl had carried — evidently knocked from her hand by the swoop of her captor.

He was about to pick it up, when suddenly far off in the dim mistiness toward which she had been carried, he saw a brilliant, star-like light, moving rapidly. It was unlike the phosphorescent gleam of the light carrying flyers, and he instantly recognized its import. Maza had lighted her brilliant head lamp in a last, desperate effort to guide him to her rescue.

With mighty bounds which, on earth, would have been

phenomenal, but on the moon were quite normal leaps for his earth-trained muscles, he set out in swift pursuit.

XII. AERIAL BATTLE

As ROGER SANDERS plunged downward from the sky, the fragments of Ted's shattered Blettendorf dropping around him, the three strange globes that had wrought such swift destruction with their green rays in so short a time, disappeared from view in a blinding whirl of cloud and snow. His parachute was whipped about by the force of the wind until he feared the lashings would be torn loose, but they held, and he presently landed, waist deep, in a snow drift.

He was floundering about, endeavoring to extricate himself from the clutches of the wet, sticky mess, when suddenly he heard his name called:

"Mr. Sanders."

He answered, and a moment later a figure shuffled toward him and helped him from the drift. It was Bevans.

"Didn't fall in as deeply as you, sir," he said. "Landed in the middle of the road, while you went in the ditch. I've been walking along, calling your name in the hope of locating you."

"Did you notice where the professor fell?"

"Yes, sir. He leaped before I did, and I saw him fall on the bridge of that strange globe. He tried to jump off again, but one of those diamond-shaped port holes opened, and he was dragged inside. I suppose they slaughtered him. A horrible ending for one of the greatest minds of the century."

"Awful," replied Roger. "Ted will be broken up when he hears it — that is if he lives to hear it. But we can't help things any by crying about them. Any idea where we are?"

"I should say we're somewhere in Indiana, sir, and not far from a flying field. Have you noticed the flashes of light and dark in the snow above us at regular intervals? Must be from a beacon."

"Well, let's see if we can find out."

Guided by the dimly seen flashes, the two at length found themselves at the airdrome of the South Bend Flying Field — a government training station for student aviators since the

advent of planes equipped to rise or descend vertically, and the consequent ability of experienced pilots to land "on a dime".

Ridding themselves of a considerable weight of sticky snow by brushing each other, they entered the building, where a watchman, with a huge, foul-smelling cob pipe in his mouth, was playing a game of solitaire.

Spying a radiovisiphone, Roger was hurrying toward it to make his report while Bevans explained things to the watchman, when the figure of a man in military uniform suddenly appeared in the disc. He read from a sheet of paper held in his hand:

> M. O. 318,246
>
> Three flying globes sighted by U. S. S. P's 347, 1098 and 221. 347 destroyed by strange green ray from one of the globes. 1098 and 221 shelling them without apparent effect when their radios were silenced. All combat planes in Zone 36 are ordered to report, fully manned, to division headquarters, and stand by for orders.
>
> General J. Q. Marshall.

"Oh, boy! There'll be some scrap, now!" said Roger, "but I'm afraid our planes won't stand much chance against those green rays. I'd like to be in on it, though."

"I, too, sir," said Bevans.

Roger rapidly whirled the dials of the radiovisiphone, presently obtaining direct communication with President Whitmore, to whom he made his report. He was ordered back to Chicago at once, a plane being requisitioned from the flying field for the purpose.

As he and Bevans were about to take off they noticed six combat planes, manned and waiting orders. These rose only a few seconds after they did.

The air was now much warmer, the snow having been replaced by a faint drizzle of rain. This, too, subsided before they had flown half way to their destination, but a heavy fog, following the swift melting of the snow, made the visibility exceedingly low.

Despite this handicap, however, the skillful Bevans landed

his plane neatly on the roof of the Dustin Building, turning it over to another of Ted's pilots to be returned immediately to the flying field.

The cold weather had passed as quickly as it had come, and this fact added to the evidence that it had been directly produced by the giant green ray from the moon.

Back in his office, Roger quickly communicated with his wife by wrist radiophone — then waded into the mass of work which had accumulated during his absence. According to the shop reports the great interplanetary vehicle would soon be ready for launching. But fully as important as this, he found that ten thousand pistol degravitors and a thousand large degravitors for use on combat planes were completed and ready to be loaded with the special anode-cathode ray batteries in process in another division. Turning to the report of the superintendent of the battery division, he found that a hundred of the large and five hundred of the small batteries were ready for use.

Going to the safe, he took out the directions for assembling and firing which Ted had left, and after giving them a careful reading, ordered ten of the large and a hundred of the small weapons and an equal number of suitable anode-cathode batteries sent up to his office.

Morning came before he had completed his work of assembling them. Then, carrying a large and a small degravitor to the roof, he tested them on the remains of Ted's metal hangar and found that they worked satisfactorily.

Hurrying back to his office he set the safety catch on every weapon — then ordered them packed and loaded into one of Ted's freight-carrying electroplanes. And hour later, with Bevans as pilot, he was on his way to Washington.

As he neared the capital he used his binoculars on the surrounding territory, and noticed the havoc wrought by the green rays. At points where the effects of the rays had ended, rivers and creeks were blocked by ice gorges, overflowing the surrounding territory. The vegetation was wilted and lifeless, as if blighted by a heavy frost. In the villages and towns, Red Cross workers were going from house to house, relieving the sufferings of the survivors, followed by under-

takers' cars and large trucks, loaded with the canvas-wrapped remains of those who would suffer no more.

On his arrival at the Capitol he sought and gained an immediate interview with the President.

The chief executive of the country looked up from the stack of papers on his desk as Roger entered, and greeted him with:

"Now, what the devil are you doing here? I thought I ordered you back to Chicago last night. Who is going to look after your plant and radio station with both you and Dustin away?"

"Important business," replied Roger. "I'll be leaving for Chicago again within the hour, but I've something to show you that, for the present, I don't dare make public over the air."

"What about your code? Afraid someone will figure them out?"

"Not at all, but this is something you will have to be shown. I have some new weapons invented by Mr. Dustin, a few of which have been manufactured in his plant under my direction during his absence — weapons with which I believe we can successfully combat the green rays of the moon men."

"Where are they?"

"In one of our freight carriers, now on the roof of the Lincoln Hotel under guard."

Without waiting to hear more, President Whitmore seized his hat and said:

"We'll have a look at them right now."

On the way out he gave orders that Secretary of War Jamison and General Marshall meet him on the roof of the Lincoln in fifteen minutes. Once out of the Capitol, they were quickly transported to the hotel roof in the President's private helicopter limousine.

Roger brought out one of the pistol degravitors, unwrapped it, and explained its use to the chief executive. Then he had an old propeller blade suspended on a wire, and proceeded to demolish it before the eyes of the astonished President.

At this moment Secretary Jamison and General Marshall

arrived, and another old blade was disintegrated for their benefit.

Secretary Jamison, a newly appointed civilian, showed wonder and amazement, but General Marshall seemed unconvinced.

"What is the effective range of this weapon?" he asked.

"The theoretical range of this one," replied Roger, "as worked out by Mr. Dustin, is one mile. In other words, it is supposed to completely disintegrate any known matter of any possible hardness or tensile strength, up to that distance. Beyond that distance, however, it would be deadly to man or animals, even though it should not completely destroy their bodies, up to a distance of perhaps two miles. I have with me, also, weapons constructed on the same principle, but much larger, with a theoretical range of twenty-five miles."

"Have the weapons been tested at the ranges you name?"

"Not to my knowledge, but when Mr. Dustin figures something out it is usually right."

"I would respectfully suggest, Mr. President," said the General, stiffly, "that they be so tested."

"And I was about to suggest the same thing," rejoined Roger.

"We'll make the tests at once," decided the President. "While the General is arranging for the aerial targets you may get out one of the larger weapons, Mr. Sanders."

Fifteen minutes later, Roger and the President were hovering on the shore of Chesapeake Bay in the latter's helicopter limousine. Several hundred feet above the General and the Secretary of War hovered in a government plane, while one of their men directed the four aerial targets, miniature helicopter planes controlled by radio.

When one of them had flown a distance of a mile out over the bay the General signaled Roger who promptly brought it down with his pistol degravitor. A second, placed two miles away, presently crumpled and fell, although it withstood about five minutes' exposure to the rays of the small weapon at that distance.

Then Roger mounted his large degravitor on a tripod, and with the assistance of his powerful field glasses, brought down

one of the targets which meanwhile had been stationed at a distance of twenty-five miles up the bay. The fourth target, placed thirty-five miles away, which was as far as he could see it with his glasses, suffered a similar fate after only a few seconds exposure to the rays.

"Marvellous!" commented the President, as they winged their way back to the Capitol. "How many of these degravitors are ready for use?"

"I brought ten of the large and a hundred of the small ones with me," replied Roger. "Within the week I can send you ninety more of the large and four hundred of the small."

"And how fast can you turn them out after that?"

"We are equipped to turn out five hundred small and one hundred large a week. If more are required we can enlarge our capacity at any time."

"Let the order stand on the weekly basis you mention, then," said the President as they got out of the limousine, "unless I send you word to increase it."

They returned once more to the President's office, where he was immediately signaled by the radiovisiphone operator.

"World News Broadcasters on the air will announce important tidings from China in one minute. Shall I tune them in, sir?"

"Yes," replied the President, seating himself at his desk and watching the disc.

A picture of the World News Announcer quickly flashed on the screen, and he stood looking at them for a moment, holding his chronometer in one hand and a sheet of paper in the other. Then he said:

"Our correspondent in Peiping announces that the three strange globes from the moon, which destroyed three scout planes with their green rays last night and then disappeared, arrived in Peiping this morning.

"A dozen of the queer, round-bodied men immediately went into conference with the Chinese president and his cabinet. As soon, however, as the odd visitors had been described to the Chinese people, and, of course, seen by many of them, and it became generally known that the government purposed submitting to the rule of the moon government and

assisting the lunar emperor to conquer the earth, a revolution was fomented and the Capitol attacked.

"The Chinese president and the members of his cabinet were all slain in the battle that followed, as were the twelve moon men closeted with them. After laying waste the greater part of the city, and killing hundreds of thousands with their green rays, the globes then departed, flying eastward. They were last sighted flying high over southern Japan with terrific speed, apparently bound for the United States.

"General Fu Yen, the revolutionary leader and new provisional president, announces his intention to stand by the other nations of the world in the war with the moon, and will shortly send official messages to the other powers to that effect. It is believed that he is supported in this decision by at least ninety percent of the Chinese people.

"One of his first official acts was to place Dr. Fang, the Manchu, under arrest as an instigator of the plot to sell out the nation to the moon monarch, Dr. Wu, his co-conspirator, having been slain with the former president and cabinet members during the attack on the Capitol."

"Interesting, and vastly relieving, if true," commented the President, "so far as the Chinese are concerned. But we still have those flying globes to contend with. They are on their way over here now, and nobody knows how fast they can travel. I think you brought out the new weapons in the nick of time, Mr. Sanders. Would you care to direct a combat squadron sent out to meet our belligerent visitors?"

"I'd be delighted with the honor," replied Roger.

"Very well. Hurry over and get your weapons unlimbered. I'll have ten expert gunners over at the hotel roof in as many minutes, and while you are explaining the weapons to them, five combat planes will be made ready."

Five minutes later, Roger, with the help of Bevans, was hastily unloading the large degravitors from the freighter, when an air alarm siren sounded below them, followed by another and another until the city was in an uproar.

In a moment a fleet of combat planes left the ground and headed westward. Using his glasses, Roger saw the reason. The three huge lunar globes which had, only a few minutes

before, been reported on the way to the United States, were flying swiftly toward the Capitol, raking the ground beneath them with their deadly green rays, more than a dozen of which shone from each globe — and occasionally destroying aircraft that approached them.

Standing on the hotel roof beside Ted's aerial freighter was the helicopter limousine of the President. Its chauffeur was idly leaning against a wing, watching the fast disappearing squadron which had just risen.

"Quick, Bevans!" said Roger. "It's you and me for it! Grab those controls and I'll bring a degravitor!"

They rose, a moment later, with helicopters roaring, while the President's pilot, who had lost his prop and his balance, scrambled to his feet and gaped after them. The plane was a swift one, and in a few minutes Bevans had brought it close behind the aerial squadron.

"Straight up, now," ordered Roger, "and make it snappy."

As they began their assent the battle started with the rattle of machine guns and the boom of rapid fire turret guns. Then the globes, apparently unharmed by the gunfire, began systematically wiping out the defense squadron with their green rays. One by one, huge combat planes were crumpling and crashing to the ground, when Roger brought his degravitor to bear on the foremost globe. His invisible ray cut a round hole about four feet in diameter clear through the center of the lunar vehicle, with no apparent effect on its progress or lethal ray projectors. But he had only to lower, then slightly elevate his weapon, and the globe was divided as neatly as a knife divides an apple, both halves crashing instantly to the ground.

Swinging his degravitor into line on another globe, Roger proceeded to halve it as he had the first, but before he could turn it on the third globe, the latter, its commander apparently fearing the fate of the first two, elevated its forward disc and shot straight up into the air with such appalling speed that it disappeared completely in a moment.

Roger clapped his binoculars to his eyes, but even they failed to reveal the swiftly flying globe.

"No use to follow that bird, Bevans," he said. "He's well

on his way to the moon by this time. Let's go and have a look at the ones we brought down."

They descended, but a half dozen of the government combat planes were ahead of them, and the men were dragging the bodies of stunned and dead Lunites from the wrecks when they arrived. Forty dazed prisoners, most of whom had fractured limbs, were taken from the wrecks, and twenty-six bodies.

Roger's great fear was that he might find the body of Professor Ederson in the wrecks, but there was no sign of it. Either he had been completely destroyed by the degravitor rays, or was in the globe which had escaped.

Only thirty of the squadron of fifty combat planes which had flown out to meet the foe accompanied Roger back to the Capitol. The others, together with their crews, had been utterly destroyed by the green rays.

Back in the President's office, Roger received the commendation of the chief executive with a deprecatory shrug.

"It was nothing," he said. "Easier than breaking clay pigeons with a trap gun."

"I don't believe the General will ask for any more demonstrations," smiled the President. "From now on, he'll be crying night and day for degravitors."

At this moment the President's radiovisiphone operator appeared in the disc and said:

"Chicago is calling Mr. Sanders, sir."

"Tune them in," said the President.

There instantly appeared in the disc, the face of Ted's day operator, Miss Whitley.

"Mr. Stanley, in charge of the big radiovisiphone, thinks the moon people are trying to get in touch with us," she said.

"Tell him to hold them, if he can, until we can silence all broadcasting stations," replied Roger. "Then connect me with him."

XIII. FLYING REPTILES

DESPITE THE mighty bounds with which Ted Dustin pursued the hideous flying reptile which was carrying off Maza of

the Moon, the star-like gleam of her head lamp quickly grew more dim, showing that he was being rapidly outdistanced.

Presently it twinkled and went out, but he continued his pace, unabated, in the same direction.

As he hurried on, huge herbivorous dinosaurs, disturbed at their feeding, raised their massive heads from time to time to contemptuously snort fiery vapor at the queer and insignificant creature that bounded past them. Mighty reptilian carnivores, their bloody feasts interrupted, were more hostile, snarling or roaring hideously when he passed close to them, but he paid no heed to either.

Once his path was barred by a great, quill covered creature resembling a tiger, with the exception of the tail, which was a short, thick, spine-covered stub. It was larger than a draft horse, and presented a most fearsome appearance. With gleaming tusks bared, and sickle-like claws unsheathed, it sprang for him.

He halted, digging his toes into the ground for an instant to stop his forward momentum — then leaped backward, alighting fully fifty feet behind the spot on which he had stood. Before the creature could spring again he brought both pistol degravitors into play, and although the invisible beams played for but a moment across the huge breast of the beast, it was as if a giant scythe had suddenly cut through it, dividing the dorsal part of the body from the ventral. The claws and belly, apparently impelled by something akin to reflex action, leaped weakly forward, but the head and upper part of the body slipped off and fell to the ground behind them.

Without pausing to view the unusual sight of four massive legs wabbling disjointedly about carrying a great, sagging belly, Ted again pressed forward.

Presently the character of the country he was crossing changed. At first the shimmering, undulating surface of the savanna was broken by occasional outcroppings of white stone, mostly conical in form, but as he progressed, the vegetation grew more and more sparse until it disappeared altogether. He was in a forest of white columns, cones and pyramids — mighty stalagmites that dwarfed to insignificance anything of which he had ever heard or read, reaching up-

ward toward equally huge stalactites, depending from the vaulted roof above. The ground beneath his feet was completely covered by rock fragments, varying in bulk from mere white powder to huge boulders weighing thousands of tons — evidently the remains of both stalactites and stalagmites dislodged by seismic disturbances.

His pace was slackened by these constant obstructions, and by the fact that the light gradually diminished in intensity as he drew away from the luminous vegetation. As he penetrated further and further into the deepening gloom that shrouded the ghostly columns there came to him the conviction that his quest was well nigh hopeless. There came, also, in the dark moment, the realization that the girl he had known for so short a time had come to mean far more to him than a mere companion in adventure — that if she were dead, life would have little to offer him.

Tired and dejected, he sat down on a boulder to rest and to think. Automatically he reached in his pocket for his black briar. As he did so, a tiny pebble suddenly fell at his feet. Several more followed as he quickly glanced upward.

Just behind him the huge stump of a broken stalagmite, fully a hundred feet in diameter and forty feet to where it had been cracked off, reared its shattered head. Turning his gaze toward it, he saw the tip of a huge pinion brushing back and forth across the edge as if its owner were engaged in a struggle. But most important of all, he noticed that the end of the wing as well as the broken edges of the stalagmite were bathed in a white radiance which differed in color and appearance from the phosphorescent luminosity of the lunar flora and fauna. Was it from the head lamp of Maza?

Bounding to his feet, he looked in vain for a place to climb the stalactite. Then, remembering the advantage his earthly muscles gave him, he backed up for a few paces, took a running start, and sprang into the air.

He had hoped to be able to catch hold of the rim of the broken top, but to his surprise, he passed completely over it, alighting in a cup-like depression about twenty feet in diameter which housed two of the homeliest looking creatures on which he had ever set eyes. They were scrawny, long legged,

goggle eyed caricatures of the flying reptile which had carried off his companion some time before. Standing on the edge of the rim, dangling the girl by one leg in its huge mandibles and balancing itself with outspread wings, was the reptile itself, apparently trying to feed her to its young. That they had been unable, thus far, to do more than strip some of the wool from her armor, was evinced by the condition of their saw-edged bills, which both were shaking for the evident purpose of trying to rid them of the annoying fuzz.

All this, Ted saw at a glance, and no sooner saw than he acted. Whipping out a degravitor, he completely severed the great, arched neck of the reptile with a single sweep of its deadly ray — then caught the girl in his arms as she fell headlong, and was himself knocked to the floor by the falling, hissing head of the monster, while its giant body fluttered and toppled backward to crash to the ground a moment later. Partly stunned though he was by the blow from that huge head, he quickly dispatched the two hideous young ones with his degravitors — then turned his attention to the girl who lay across his lap.

Her eyes were closed and her head hung limply against the side of her glass helmet. Quickly opening her visor, he chafed her cheeks and forehead and blew on her eyelids, the faint flutter of which presently notified him that her consciousness was returning.

"Ted — Ted Dustin," she murmured, and snuggled more closely to him.

He held her thus for a few moments, his heart beats registering an acceleration that could not possibly have been due to his recent exertions. Then she opened her great blue eyes, looked up into his, and said:

"Kari na Ultu."

This, he interpreted to mean: "Go to Ultu," so he, not having sufficient lunar vocabulary to ask her in what direction, managed to convey his question by signs.

She sat up, looked at the instrument strapped to her wrist for a moment, then pointed in the direction in which they had been traveling.

"Ultu," she said.

For answer, he rose, still holding her in his arms, walked to the edge of the stalagmite, and stepped off, alighting at the end of the forty foot fall with no more of a jar than a similar step from a height of seven feet would have caused on earth.

Her little exclamation of alarm as they fell was changed to a cry of surprise and delight when she saw they had reached the ground unhurt. Then she signed that she wished to be put down.

He gently lowered her to her feet, and together they pressed on into the deepening gloom — their way now made easier by the light of the girl's head lamp, reflected with many weird effects by the spectral white columns.

For many miles they traveled through murk so black that it seemed almost to have solidity, their range of vision limited to the small area lighted by Maza's head lamp. Then a faint phosphorescent twilight tempered the thick darkness, and scattered tufts of luminous vegetation led into a mighty, tangled jungle, as well lighted by its own flora as the first one they had crossed.

Before they entered it, Ted unholstered one of his degravitors and, handing it to his companion, showed her how to fire it by pressing the trigger. She tested it, first on a clump of luminous toadstools and then on a small flying reptile, and he was delighted to see that her marksmanship was excellent, due, no doubt, to her proficiency with a red ray projector.

Then she extinguished her head lamp, and together they plunged into the riotous medley of sound and color, of strange smells and stranger sights that constituted a lunar subterranean forest.

After more than an hour of travel through the jungle without molestation from any of its queer creatures, they arrived at the bank of a swiftly flowing stream about sixty feet across.

The girl took a small drinking cup from a pocket of her armor, dipped it in the stream, and offered it to Ted, but he gallantly shook his head, indicating that she should drink first. She did so, sipping the water slowly as if it had been the last glass of some priceless wine of rare and ancient vintage. Ted filled his canteen in the meanwhile, and drank a deep

draught, finding the water slightly alkaline, but quite palatable.

Having drunk her water, Maza opened two clasps which loosed her glass helmet, and lifted it from her head. Then she sat down on a low toadstool and began a minute examination of the fine wires on the crest which constituted the antennae of her radio set. She worked with them for some time, her white brow often wrinkled in puzzlement, but presently gave up with a shrug of disappointment.

Then Ted, who had been watching her intently, took the helmet from her hands and closely examined the broken head-set himself. His knowledge of radio, combined with his extraordinary inventive genius, stood him in such good stead that it was not long before he had located the source of the trouble.

While he set rapidly to work to repair the damage with tools from his pocket kit, his companion gathered some dried and broken ribs of tree fronds that had fallen nearby and ignited them with a tiny red ray from a small lighter she carried. Then, taking Ted's hunting knife from its sheath, she cut several slabs from a pear shaped mushroom that grew near the water's edge, spitted them on a green frond, and grilled them over the fire.

By the time Ted had finished his work of repairing her small radio set, she had spread the top of a toadstool with large flat leaves in lieu of a table cover, and placed thereon tastily grilled slabs of mushrooms, together with several varieties of small fruits which grew in abundance all around them.

Returning her helmet to her, Ted showed his admiration of her lunar woodcraft and culinary skill by seating himself opposite her and heartily falling to. The mushroom slabs were delicious, and the odd fruits exceptionally palatable.

When they had finished, Maza pressed the signal button connected to her head set, there was an answering voice, and she immediately began a conversation which lasted several minutes, but which Ted was, of course, unable to understand. Once he saw her glance at the instrument on her wrist, and judged that she was telling someone their location. Presently

she ceased talking, walked to a bed of moss beneath some long, overhanging fronds, and lay down as if to sleep, motioning Ted to do likewise.

Tired as he was, Ted could not bring himself to even think of closing his eyes in so insecure a spot, so he sat down on the moss beside her, unholstered his degravitor, and patting it, indicated that he would guard her while she slept. She closed her eyes without protest, and presently the regular rise and fall of her small, shapely bosom indicated that she was asleep.

For several hours Ted amused himself by watching the strange creatures of the earth, air and water. Giant saurians, with necks gracefully arched, paddled lazily past, sometimes darting their heads with lightning like rapidity into the water, and usually bringing up fish or small amphibians in their powerful jaws. Small flying reptiles, soaring low, sometimes descended to the surface of the water, sometimes dived beneath it, triumphantly emerging with living, wriggling food morsels which they usually swallowed as they flew, with little or no mastication.

But tired nature gradually asserted itself, and Ted finally caught himself nodding. He shook himself awake, but eventually nodded again, and thinking to close his eyes for but a moment, slept.

His awakening, he knew not how long thereafter, was rude and startling, for a warrior clad in glittering silver armor was kneeling on his chest, holding the point of a keen sword to his throat while two others, similarly accoutred, held his arms against the ground. His first thought was for the safety of his girl companion, but a glance showed him that she was completely surrounded by a ring of the armored soldiers.

XIV. NOTE OF APPEAL

HAVING LEAPED from Ted's Blettendorf ahead of his companions, Professor Ederson was unable to see what had become of Roger and Bevans, for his parachute opened almost instantly, shutting out his view above.

What he did see, however, filled him with apprehension

and horror, for he was falling directly onto one of the huge globes that had wrought such havoc with the Blettendorf and with the government patrol planes.

In vain, he endeavored to sway his body to one side as he hurtled downward toward the enemy craft. There was a sudden shock as he struck the curved bridge — then his parachute bellied out to a horizontal position. Badly shaken though he was, he tried to rise and leap over the railing, but at this moment a diamond shaped door opened, and a rotund figure clad in yellow fur and wearing a pagoda shaped helmet with a glass visor raised, leaped upon him. With a short, curved knife, his assailant slashed the ropes which bound him to his parachute — then dragged him inside the globe, slamming a door after him.

Despite his feeble struggles, for he had been weakened by the shock of his fall, his captor bound his wrists behind him and jerked him to his feet. Then he pushed him roughly along a narrow hall — opened a diamond shaped door, and flung him into a tiny cell. The door clanged behind him as he fell, bruised and half stunned, to the metal floor, and he was left alone in stuffy, inky darkness.

How long he lay in the black hole, suffering from a dozen bruises and the pain of his tightly bound wrists, the professor had no means of knowing, for his luminous chronometer was on his left wrist, and his hands were tied behind him.

He judged, however, that he had spent slightly more than an hour in the stuffy room when the door opened. He was jerked to his feet by the fellow who had captured him, and led down a narrow passageway into a commodious cabin where an extremely portly Lunite, whose pagoda-like helmet was taller than that of his fellows, sat cross-legged on a raised dais, examining a scroll which lay on a small, diamond-shaped table before him.

He looked up as the professor was dragged before him, disclosing a puffy, rotund countenance decorated by a long, thin moustache that drooped below the lowest fold of his enormous triple chin. His little, slanting eyes glittered triumphantly as they took in the figure of the professor.

"You have done well, Lin Ching — even better than I

thought," he said, "for this is the worm who tried to communicate with our great lord, P'an-ku, after all diplomatic relations had been severed with Du Gong. I recognize him from the picture flashed on our screens when he tried to send a message to which we refused to respond. He is evidently a linguist — perhaps can even speak with us."

"If this be true, I will begin by teaching him manners," said Lin Ching. "Make obeisance, low and miserable creature of Du Gong, to the mighty Kwan Tsu Khan, commander in chief of the Imperial Navy of P'an-ku."

"I am an Am-Er-I-Khan, myself," replied the professor slowly, in order that he might properly use the unaccustomed language, "and make obeisance to none but the great God of my fathers."

The fat Kwan Tsu Khan rubbed his chubby hands together and actually beamed.

"Better and better, Lin Ching," he said "You have captured a great as well as a wise man." He turned to the professor. "How did you learn our language, Am-Er-I-Khan?" he asked.

"By studying the modern speech and ancient manuscripts of the descendants of that P'an-ku who, thousands of years ago, journeyed from your world to mine," replied the professor.

"Bring a cushion for the Khan from Du Gong, and cut his bonds," ordered Kwan Tsu Khan. "Then retire outside the door, that we may hold private converse."

Lin Ching drew his sharp knife and severed the bonds which held the professor's numbed wrists behind his back. Then he brought a great, thick cushion which he placed on the floor behind his captive, and assisted him to sit down. After a deep obeisance toward the dais, he retired to the passageway, closing the diamond-shaped door after him.

"Now, Am-Er-I-Khan," said Kwan Tsu Khan, "just how much do you know about the history of that great and worshipful P'an-ku who journeyed to your world so long ago? And what can you tell me of his descendants?"

"I have only conjectured that such a person existed and traveled to our world," replied the professor, chafing his numbed wrists. "Even his descendants, who are today nu-

merous as the celestial stars, refer to him only as the first man, their first ancestor. It was by combining the statements in your message to us with the traditions of the descendants of P'an-ku and noting the easily recognized racial resemblance as well as the philological similarity, that I formed my theory."

"Your conjecture," said Kwan Tsu Khan, "must be correct, for our most ancient records tell of the journey of one of the mightiest of our P'an-kus to Du Gong, after our terrific battle with Lu Gong had vitiated our surface atmosphere to such an extent that life on Ma Gong was impossible except in the deepest caves. But nothing was ever heard from P'an-ku thereafter, and it was thought that he lost his life in the attempt to reach Du Gong."

"That is interesting," answered the professor. "I understand that you refer to your world as Ma Gong, and to mine as Du Gong, but may I ask what Lu Gong is?"

"Why, Lu Gong is the world which circles the great Lord Sun in an orbit just outside that of Du Gong — the world which appears red to your watchers of the sky."

"Then Lu Gong is the world we call Mars," said the professor. "And you have a tradition of a war with Mars?"

"We have more than a tradition. Our world carries the scars of that war, and will carry them to eternity."

"I should be interested in hearing about it."

"Very well, but I can only review it briefly, as time presses. Many thousands of years ago our world was a planet with its own orbit, which was midway between that of your world and Lu Gong, or Mars, as you call it. It rotated on its axis, even as do your planet and Lu Gong, and its days and nights were shorter and its years longer than your own are today.

"For millions of years my people had inhabited and dominated Ma Gong — developing a high civilization, and scientists who had explored the infinitely small and the infinitely great. Our interplanetary vehicles had traveled to and explored the other worlds that served the Great Lord Sun, as well as their numerous satellites, and on some of these we found human beings, but on none but Lu Gong did we find beings with a culture that even approached our own.

"Soon a regular freight and passenger line was in service between Ma Gong and Lu Gong, and we traded and visited with that accursed race of slim, white beings in all friendliness. Then they sent a colony of their pale people to live on Ma Gong, and we sent a colony of our own people to settle on Lu Gong. From the start these white colonists made trouble. Presently blood was shed, reprisals followed, and things went so far that war was eventually declared between the two worlds — a war which wiped out the people of Lu Gong, and most of the people of Ma Gong — destroying also, the culture of a million years on our world.

"The terrific weapons which the people of Lu Gong used were huge clusters of meteoroids which they hurled at us, after condensing them in interplanetary space by bringing into play certain magnetic lines of force which they were able to control. The face of our world still bears the hideous dents where these clusters fell. Many wiped out millions of helpless people, destroying the work of centuries. The interplanetary fleets, battling with their rays — ours green, those of Lu Gong red — practically destroyed each other.

"Our people were unable to condense and hurl meteoric matter as the people of Lu Gong did, but they were not lacking in scientific knowledge, and the great P'an-ku who ruled them at the time set up great ray projectors clear around our world, several of which were constantly trained on the enemy planet. The purpose of these rays was to destroy the atmosphere of Lu Gong, dissipating it into interplanetary space, and eventually stifling all the inhabitants of that world.

"The worst drawback to this method of warfare was that it slowly vitiated our own atmosphere where the beams passed through it, and thus constituted a system of slow suicide.

"No quarter was asked, and there was none given on either side. Meanwhile our scientists, who had succeeded experimentally in slightly perturbing the motion of our world around the sun, asked permission of P'an-ku to construct a huge electro-magnetic power plant with which they might control the motion of Ma Gong at will, and thus dodge the huge missiles of Lu Gong which were daily wiping out our

cities and decimating our population. He granted them permission, and they soon increased the number of their power units to such a degree that they were ready to try to control the orbit of Ma Gong.

"The units worked, and the plan was to move Ma Gong behind your world, where it would be shielded from the bombardment of meteoric clusters. This was accomplished, but when the proper place had been reached, the scientists came in contact with terrific magnetic forces on which they had not counted — their power units were incapacitated, and they found themselves not only bound to the Great Lord Sun, but to your world as well. Ma Gong's axial rotation was affected, so it eventually became as you now observe it. Its orbit, after it settled down, was much as it is today, so that it was now behind your world, now racing ahead on an outer curve, now lagging behind on an inner one, only to be caught up at a certain point and jerked forward once more to repeat the whole process.

"The bombardment from Lu Gong continued until both worlds were nearly without people to carry on the battle. P'an-ku, himself, was slain when the imperial city was destroyed by a meteoric cluster. The atmosphere of Ma Gong became so thin that the few people who remained alive did so because they retreated into the great inner caverns where what remained of the atmosphere had flown like water flows — toward the source of gravitational pull.

"The operators of the great ray projectors finally died at their posts for want of air. The bombardment from Lu Gong gradually waned as its inhabitants succumbed to the power of our ray projectors, until it ceased altogether.

"Only a few hundreds of our people were left alive in the great caverns, and there was not among them one scientist — for the scientists had all died in defense of our world. So far as scientific knowledge went, the race was thus set back for thousands of years. The simple people who had fled to the caves — for the most part agriculturalists and tradesmen — knew not how to construct an interplanetary vehicle, a green ray projector, an atmosphere disintegrator, or any of the thousands of useful but intricate devices formerly made by

this desire to live and, if possible, perpetuate his race and his imperial line."

"But what of the white race which now inhabits Ma Gong?" asked the professor. "Whence did they come?"

"About twelve hundred years after the great war," said Kwan Tsu Khan, "a party of our ancestors who were exploring the surface of our world, met a party of white people, descendants of the Lu Gong colonists they afterward learned, who had fled to the inner caverns during the great war. They, too, had invented heat proof, cold proof suits and concentrated air tanks which enabled them to travel on the crust of our world. A parley was started, but because of the great hatred between the two races, a quarrel quickly became a battle, and only a few of the explorers from either side returned to tell their stories to their respective countrymen.

"This started a war between the two races once more, and my people were conquered because, while the enemy had succeeded in manufacturing their red ray projectors, our scientists had been unable, thus far, to reproduce the green ray projectors of their ancestors. For hundreds of years thereafter the heirs of P'an-ku ruled only as viceroys for the emperors of the white race. This lasted until half a century ago, when our people were freed by a magnanimous and peace loving ruler of the white people named Mazo Khan. The languages of the two races were, meanwhile, fused into one, which is now the universal speech of Ma Gong.

"Our scientists had been quietly at work for centuries, endeavoring to regain the secret of the green ray, as well as to reconstruct interplanetary vehicles as efficient as those of their ancestors. When they were set free by the magnanimous Mazo Khan work went on with redoubled vigor and, as you see, we now have both.

"The present ruler of the white race, who still calls herself 'Maza of Ma Gong,' the hereditary title of the supreme ruler of Ma Gong, is the granddaughter of the man who set us free, and even though she may desire to once more enslave us, she cannot do so because we now have the green ray and the interplanetary vehicles.

"We, on our part, could enslave her and her people only

the scientists. They were forced to begin with simpler things and gradually build a new civilization and a new school of scientists.

"Even the libraries, which would have been of inestimable value to them, were on the airless surface of Ma Gong where they could not be reached, and most of these had been destroyed by the meteoric clusters projected from Lu Gong. The others succumbed to age and the incessant battering of planetesimal particles which followed the destruction of our atmosphere, before they could be reached.

"The eldest son of P'an-ku, who became P'an-ku at the death of his father, had been commander in chief of our interplanetary war fleets, and had been taken prisoner by the ruler of Lu Gong. He had left a wife with child, and she fled with the few hundreds who were the progenitors of our present race into the great caverns of our world. There a male child was born to her, and as he was the eldest son of that P'an-ku who never came back to us, he was the hereditary ruler of my people, and his descendants have directed their destinies ever since.

"Nearly a thousand years after the great war, our ancestors, who had multiplied in numbers and increased in knowledge, were able to construct suits in which they could explore the surface of our world, breathing air which was concentrated in tanks they carried with them. While searching the ruins of the ancient capital of P'an-ku, they came upon a metal cylinder which contained a message left there by his eldest son a thousand years before. It stated that he had escaped from Lu Gong, as there were none left alive there to detain him, and had come to Ma Gong in his one man space flyer, only to find his world destitute of people and untenable because of its lack of atmosphere.

"He stated that he was leaving for Du Gong — that world inhabited, in those days, by strange monsters and savage peoples, and that he would never have deserted Ma Gong had he found but a single one of his subjects alive, but that he could no longer stay in a dead world when there was a chance that he might find life and an empire in a live one. In closing, he implored the Great Lord Sun to pardon him for

by a terrific loss of life on both sides, so we prefer to leave her unmolested as long as she does not bother us, and extend our conquests along lines of less resistance for the present. Of course we must conquer her people eventually, for there cannot be two rulers of Ma Gong, but the time is not yet ripe.

"The arrested motion of the vehicle tells me that we are now at our destination, so I must leave the globe for a while. If you will give me your word that you will not attempt to escape I will permit you the freedom of my ship."

"Where are we?" asked the professor.

"We are in the capital city of the descendants of that P'an-ku who visited your world many thousands of years ago. I am to meet some of his descendants in conference."

"I will give you my word not to try to escape," said the professor.

"Very well. So long as you stay on the ship you will be unmolested."

He pressed a button in the wall behind him, and Lin Ching instantly opened the door.

"You will permit the wise Khan, Am-Er-I, the freedom of the ship, Lin Ching," he said, "but you will see that he is either recaptured or killed if he attempts to leave it."

"Lin Ching hears, and Lin Ching obeys," replied that individual, bowing the professor out of the room.

The professor strolled around the ship, examining its interior with considerable interest. Then he opened one of the diamond-shaped doors, and stepped out onto the bridge — instantly recognizing a section of Peiping with which he was familiar. He saw that the other two flying globes hovered near the one he was on and that several Lunites were descending each of the swaying ladders which hung down from the interplanetary vehicles.

He was gazing idly down at the crowd which milled in the street below him, when he suddenly spied a familiar face looking curiously up at him. A smile of recognition crossed the face of the Chinaman in the crowd beneath, but the professor instantly made a gesture of caution and then indicated that he wanted his friend to wait below him.

Hastily jerking pencil and notebook from his pocket, the professor quickly wrote a short note in Chinese characters. It was addressed to General Fu Yen, its contents as follows:

"I am a prisoner on a lunar globe, and have given my word of honor that I will not try to escape while here. I have not, however, made any promise that I will not write notes to my friends.

"My captors are now negotiating with your government for the purpose of finally signing the agreement which will make your people the subjects of a round-bodied monarch who calls himself P'an-ku, and rules a race which inhabits the moon.

"Your people have fought and bled for freedom and a voice in their government. Are they going to renounce all this now? You, and you only, my friend, can save them. Act quickly if you would not be too late.

Sincerely,

GEO. EDERSON."

Crumpling the note into a ball, the professor called softly to the man below, who instantly took off his large helmet and held it upside down. Into this wide, inverted bowl, the professor dropped the note.

"For Fu Yen," he called, softly.

The Chinaman nodded, pocketed the note, replaced his hat on his head, and moved away, a part of the crowd.

Then, with unexpected suddenness, vise-like fingers closed on the neck of the professor, and he was shaken like a rat.

"Worm," grated a voice in his ear. "Tell me what you tossed to that person in the crowd, or by the Great Lord Sun, you shall not live to say aught else."

XV. MOON TRAVEL

AWAKENED WITH each of his arms pinned to the ground by an armored warrior and the sword of a third who knelt on his chest menacing his throat, Ted blinked dazedly and wondered if he was indeed awake, or only dreaming.

Then he heard the voice of Maza utter a sharp command.

The three warriors instantly released him and stood at attention as he rose unsteadily to his feet. Evidently these were her own soldiers who had mistaken him for an enemy. Their white skins and non-Mongoloid features showed that they were not of the race of P'an-ku.

At a second command from the girl the men filed down to the water's edge, where a long, low craft contructed of white metal, was moored. It was fashioned in the shape of a flying dragon like the one he had seen the girl riding some time before, the metallic wings held upward with edges closing at the top to make a fantastic roof for the cabin. As it was without rudder, oars or paddles, Ted was puzzled as to its means of locomotion.

Beckoning him to follow, the girl leaped lightly aboard. As the earth man stepped in after her, one of the warriors pushed off and another, seated in the prow before a small keyboard, pressed several buttons with his fingers. There was a roar from the rear of the craft and it shot backward into midstream. The helmsman pressed another row of buttons and the boat started down stream with a louder roar and a terrific burst of speed.

Making his way astern, Ted saw that the boat was both propelled and steered by two sets of three jointed pipes each, which extended from the back of the boat under water. Something, either highly compressed air or some other gas, rushed out of each pipe as the correct button was touched by the operator, and the wake, as a result, was a mass of seething bubbles. To turn right or left the helmsman had only to shut off the set of pipes on the side toward which he wished to go. To reverse the boat, he but needed to press buttons which bent the flexible jointed ends of the pipes downward and toward the front, thus reversing the direction of the pressure.

Going forward once more, Ted crouched by the side of the girl and watched the queer lunar scenery hurtle past them. The boat, he judged, must be making at least a hundred miles an hour, so his glimpses of the queer, subterranean flora and fauna were but cursory. The phosphorescent vegetation with its eerie luminosity persisted as league after

league of the winding stream was left behind them. Gigantic flying reptiles sometimes darted downward at the boat, but invariably underestimated its great speed, striking the water from one to two hundred feet behind it, then rising to flap lazily and disgustedly away in search of other less elusive quarry.

After they had traveled in this manner for nearly six hours the helmsman suddenly reversed his power, bringing the craft to a stop before two huge, heavily barred gates which extended from the bottom of the stream to the surface of a great arch of masonry that marked the beginning of a tunnel.

A warrior in the stern then struck a gong three times, and the gates slowly swung back, whereupon the boat entered the tunnel, which was lighted from above by a soft, phosphorescent radiance that emanated from hemispherical dome lights placed at regular intervals. Armored guards with long spears in their hands, and swords and ray projectors strapped to their belts, stood on each side of the gateway before small block houses. Ted noticed that they reversed their spears and bent the knee as the boat passed — evidently the military obeisance to their ruler.

Three more gates, similarly guarded, were opened for them at distances of about a quarter of a mile apart along the tunnel. Then Ted saw, a short distance ahead, a fifth gate through which a flood of bright light poured. This gate, too, opened in response to three strokes of the gong, and the boat emerged into an open stream once more.

A few buildings of white stone dotted the banks of the stream, which appeared to be under cultivation. Each of the buildings was surmounted by an enormous metal contrivance supported by a shaft that projected upward from the center of the roof, and was shaped like an umbrella turned inside out. That these were for the purpose of capturing and in some way utilizing the sun's energy, Ted did not doubt.

Noticing that all were tilted at precisely the same angle, he glanced upward to note the position of the sun, only to meet with a new surprise, for the entire valley into which they had come, nearly ten miles in width at this point, was roofed over with a vault of glass, fitted in large frames and

braced with elaborately constructed metal arches. The nearer walls of the valley rose, sheer and rugged, for about two miles. The farther walls were shrouded in blue mist that made them barely discernible.

Presently the boat stopped at a dock which projected out over the water from the side of a large building surmounted by a tall, round tower. Four taut cables, stretching from a row of similar towers about a mile to the left, passed through a great arched opening near the top of the tower, continuing through a row of towers, the first of which was about a mile to the right.

Two attendants saluted with bent knees and bowed heads, then held the boat while Maza and Ted stepped out.

They entered a building and passed through a large, arched room where a number of men, women and children bent the knee as Maza passed. A few of the men wore armor and carried weapons, but the greater number appeared to be civilians. Among these, the men wore brightly colored sleeveless cloth jackets that reached to their thighs and were belted about the waist, and which included nearly all the colors of the rainbow. They were bare armed and bare legged, and many were bare footed, although a few wore coarse sandals of plaited grass held by strands of grass rope.

The women were uniformly attired in white, clinging garments of translucent material that half revealed, half concealed their forms, and Ted was struck by this contrast to earthly customs where women dress brightly and men usually wear somber colors.

The very small children romped about quite naked. Those a little older wore breech clouts, and the larger imitated their elders according to their sexes.

Having crossed this room, Maza and Ted entered a lift which quickly whisked them to the place near the top of the tower which he had previously noticed, and through which the four cables were stretched. Suspended on overhead wheels from one of these cables was a bullet-shaped car of white metal with transparent panels in the sides and a sliding door near the center, which had apparently been held awaiting their coming.

An attendant closed the door after them as they stepped in and sank into luxuriously cushioned seats. Then the vehicle started smoothly, accelerating rapidly until Ted computed that they were going at least four hundred miles an hour.

As hour after hour slipped by and their speed continued unabated, Ted wondered at the great length of the valley. He consulted his wrist compass and noticed that they were traveling toward the southeast. The valley appeared quite uniform in width, and although there were a few wooded areas was, for the most part, apparently under cultivation. Most of the farms were irrigated by small ditches which branched out from a broad canal that extended down the center of the valley, and was fed from time to time, by streams which flowed through tunnels in the rocky walls on either side. Men and women were at work in the fields, some using farm machinery of unknown motive power, some assisted by dragon-like draft animals, and others using only hand tools.

Noticing that Ted was apparently trying to compute the distance and direction they had traveled, his companion took a rolled parchment from a pocket in the wall. It proved to be a map of the moon. She spread it out before them and pointed to the longest known lunar ray — the one which extends from the crater, Tycho, near the bottom of the southeast quadrant of the moon, curves across the southwest and northwest quadrants, and ends near the north pole in the *Mare Frigoris.*

With the pink tip of her dainty forefinger she indicated their start at the crater Hipparchus, their underground trip to the glassed over crack or valley in the moon's surface which terrestrial astronomers had always referred to as "one of the rays of Tycho," and the distance they had traveled since they entered the cable railway. She then pointed to Tycho and said: "Ultu."

Ted understood from this that Tycho or "Ultu" was their destination, and was probably a subterranean lunar city. As Ultu was the center of the most extensive ray system on the moon, Ted assumed that it was probably the capital of one of the most populous nations.

When they had finished with the map, Ted took a note

book and pencil from his pocket and wrote some of the Lunite words he had learned from the translation of Professor Ederson. The girl helped him to construct and pronounce sentences, indicating meanings by signs and by drawing pictures. Then Ted, in turn, helped his fair companion with her English. Thus the time was passed pleasantly until their arrival in Ultu.

When they reached the great central station, from which cable railways radiated in all directions, and Maza stepped out of the car, her easy cameradie disappeared, and Ted saw her on her dignity as a royal princess.

Evidently the news of her escape from capture at the hands of P'an-ku had become the common property of all of her subjects, as the huge terminal was crowded with people and the city streets around it were so choked with human beings that all traffic had been suspended. Two files of soldiers held open a lane for her as she walked down from the landing platform to where a number of gorgeously decked individuals who sparkled with jewels, some in shining armor and others in civilian attire, waited to greet her with bent knees and what Ted took to be fervent exclamations of joy at her deliverance. These were evidently the great civil and military dignitaries of her realm.

Behind the lines of soldiers, the common people were equally demonstrative. Many of the men as well as the women, wept for joy. It was plain to be seen that the young ruler was as popular as she was beautiful.

Until they had reached the great arched opening which led to the street, Ted had walked behind Maza in company with two of her most magnificently attired nobles. When they reached this point, however, she took his arm and holding one hand aloft, addressed the people. To the surprise of Ted, they all burst into loud cheering when she had finished, and the great nobles crowded around him, jostling each other for the honor of kissing his hand. It was evident that he had been given quite favorable mention for his part in her rescue from the soldiers of P'an-ku and the flying reptile.

At the foot of the steps a carriage magnificently decked in silver and crimson and drawn by two wingless dragons

awaited the Princess. She kept Ted's arm, and together they descended the stairs. He assisted her into the carriage, but hesitated to enter until she took his hand and drew him in after her.

A path was instantly cleared for them by the soldiers, and the two great reptiles that had appeared so huge and awkward started away at a fast clip.

A few minutes ride took them to the imperial palace — an imposing building of shining black stone set in white metal in lieu of mortar.

Here Ted's companion turned him over to a pompous appearing chamberlain who conducted him to a sumptuous private suite. A young, but well trained valet assisted him to remove his armor and drew a bath for him. After a refreshing bath and a shave, he was given a suit of shimmering golden yellow fabric trimmed with black binding, of a style worn by the nobles of the court. Then his attendant strapped comfortable, soft soled sandals on his feet, and buckled his belt containing his degravitors and pocket pouch, about his waist.

Presently the pompous chamberlain appeared at the door and beckoned to him. He followed the officer, who led him through a maze of hallways into a large, arched throne room, where Maza, attired in the gleaming white metal in which he had first seen her with his radiovisiphone — her golden hair held by a band of platinum-like metal powdered with glistening jewels — presided on a throne of scarlet and silver that was raised on a dias at one end of the room.

Standing at respectful attention on either side of the throne were her guards, men and women attendants, and notables both civil and military.

As he advanced beside the chamberlain, Ted noticed a familiar figure standing at the left near the foot of the throne — a venerable graybeard who wore a richly embroidered robe of dark blue. He instantly recognized him as the old man who had been with the princess when he had tried, for the second time, to communicate with the moon by radiovisiphone.

The court officer, having conducted him before the throne, bowed low and withdrew.

Although gracious and smiling, Maza was dignified, as befitted a royal princess at a formal audience. With such English words as she could muster, she introduced Ted to all the notables in turn, each of whom bowed low as his name was pronounced. The last one to be presented was the venerable graybeard.

"Ted Dustin, greatist scientist of Du Gong," she said "give *di tcha-tsi* to Vanible Khan, greatest scientist of Ma Gong."

"Di tcha-tsi," said Ted, uttering this unintelligible word of greeting because it seemed the thing to do.

"Di tcha-tsi na mu," replied the great Lunite, bowing profoundly.

"Vanible Khan, you will instruct Ted Dustin in our language, then report to me," commanded Maza.

Making profound obeisance, the old man motioned Ted to follow him, and they departed. In the suite which had been assigned to him, Ted began his lessons that day. His slight knowledge of the Lunite language and Vanible Khan's slight knowledge of English helped them greatly at the start. He learned that *"di tcha-tsi"* meant "no challenge" or "peace" and *"na mu"* was translated "to you."

For two days the two scientists pursued their linguistic studies, stopping only to eat and sleep. Each found the other such an apt pupil that they progressed with amazing rapidity. Toward the end of the second day, Vanible Khan said:

"Come with me. I have something to show you."

Together they went to the palace courtyard, where two flying dragons were saddled and ready for them.

"To direct your mount," said Vanible Khan, "simply use our words for the right or left, up or down, or straight. The beast will proceed accordingly."

Both men mounted.

"Up," commanded Vanible Khan. "Up," shouted Ted, and both beasts after running forward for a short distance with outspread wings, took to the air.

They presently alighted before a large building near the outskirts of the city, and leaving their mounts in charge of an attendant, entered a great, arched doorway.

Ted found himself in one of the largest factories he had

ever seen. Hundreds of bullet shaped cars of a kind he had ridden in with Maza on his trip to Ultu were here being manufactured or repaired by thousands of busy workers.

He cried out in pleased surprise when he suddenly spied his own interplanteary vehicle. Evidently it had been brought in by the order of Maza, and had just arrived, for workmen were removing chains by which it had been carried.

"We have many skilled mechanics here," said Vanible Khan. "If your flier can be repaired, you have but to command us."

"Summon a headman," said Ted, "and I will show him what to do."

While the chief mechanic was being brought, Ted quickly took pad and pencil from his belt pouch and drew diagrams of the missing parts. Under his and Ted's joint direction, with linguistic assistance when necessary, from Vanible Khan, the wreckage of the prow was cut away and orders were put through for the missing parts.

"In two days your flier will be ready," said the chief mechanic, when he departed.

Two days later, when Ted, in company with Vanible Khan, called at the factory, he entered the cab, and closing it, flew about under the great arched roof of the factory. The motor and controls worked perfectly. Delighted, he returned to the assembling floor, invited his fellow scientist into the cab, and darting out of the large doorway, flew with him to the roof of the palace in a few seconds.

They had scarcely alighted from the craft when a messenger hurried breathlessly up to them, and bowed low.

"Her Imperial Majesty summons your lordships to the observation room, at once," he said. "The people of Du Gong are in deadly peril."

XVI. TED ATTACKS

TED AND his companion, Vanible Khan, hurried down a maze of stairways and hallways until they arrived in a large, square room, the walls of which were divided into panels. On each panel was a moving picture which seemed to shine through

from the rear. An operator sat at a switchboard in the center of the room, pressing various buttons on the instrument before him from time to time.

Maza was there with two of her gigantic guards, and several of her oldest counselors. She pointed to one of the panels as they entered.

"P'an-ku is attacking your people with a terrible weapon, Ted Dustin," she said. "Look."

He looked at the panel she indicated, and saw as through a powerful telescope, a side view of the great lunar crater which he had learned to recognize as Copernicus. Shooting upward from the center of the crater was a bright band of green light.

"Now look at this picture," continued Maza, pointing to another panel.

He looked, and saw a telescopic view of the earth. Despite the many storm areas which hid outlines of land and water, he made out the shape of North America, and saw that Washington and the territory surrounding it were in an immense spot of green light.

"What can those rays do at that distance?" he asked Vanible Khan.

"That," replied the lunar scientist, thoughtfully stroking his long white beard, "depends wholly on the power of the ray projector which P'an-ku is employing. If powerful enough, the green rays will contract and destroy all matter which they come in contact. When nearly spent, they still have the power to remove much of the heat from everything they touch. I should say, off hand, that the area they reach at present is intensely cold — perhaps even uninhabitable for human beings."

Ted turned suddenly to Maza.

"May I have a glass helmet and a suit of insulated armor?" he asked. "My own suit is useless until I can fit a new helmet to it."

"You may, of course. But where are you going?"

"To destroy that green ray projector."

"Ten thousand of my *nak-kar* cavalry will fly with you," she said.

"You are very kind to offer help," he replied, "but I prefer to go alone. This is my war and my people are being killed."

"You refuse?" He could see that she was nettled.

"I decline with sincere thanks, if you please. Time is precious, and in my vehicle I can reach the projector before your flying beasts are well on the way, thereby saving many lives which otherwise might be sacrificed by delay."

"Very well. It is your war now, because I have not yet officially declared war on P'an-ku. I will do so immediately. Then, if we cannot be allies, I will fight him in my way and you in yours."

She turned to one of the armored nobles who stood nearby.

"See that Ted Dustin is outfitted for surface flying at once," she commanded.

Fifteen minutes later. Ted stood on the roof of the place attired in the bell-like glass helmet and white, wooly, insulated armor of Maza's people. He fidgeted impatiently while a great *nak-kar* was being saddled in order that its rider might guide him up through one of the huge and tortuous air shafts which led from the subterranean city of Ultu to the ringed plain of Tycho above.

At his side stood Vanible Khan, stroking his long white beard and coolly supervising the preparations. When the flying dragon was saddled and its rider seated, the old scientist placed his hand on Ted's shoulder, and said:

"You are taking desperate chances, boy. It is doubtful if you will ever get near enough to the projector to destroy it, but if you do you will almost certainly be killed. I bid you farewell, and my prayers and those of our people go with you."

"I realize the chances and thank you for your good wishes. Goodbye," replied Ted, closing his visor and turning to climb into his craft.

Just as he placed his foot on the lower step a hand was laid on his arm. He turned and saw Maza, flushed and panting from the exertion of hurriedly climbing to the roof. As he

turned and looked down into her eyes he saw they were flashing with anger.

She reached up and raised his visor with dainty, pink-tipped fingers.

"How dare you leave me, Ted Dustin, without saying farewell," she said. "Why you might n-never come back."

A tear rolled down her velvety cheek, and she shook her fluffy head to dislodge it.

He started to bend over — to kiss her hand. Her eyes softened — drew him to the beautiful upturned face. Before he knew what had happened, he was kissing her, and she was returning his kiss with closed eyes, her arms around his neck, her small, lithe body close to his.

Suddenly he released her, leaped into the cab, and signaled the *nak-kar* rider that he was ready. He elevated his craft slowly while the great dragon clumsily lumbered forward with wings outspread — took to the air, and circled upward toward a dark opening above.

Although the flying reptile moved swiftly through the maze of passageways and caverns, evidently of volcanic origin, which led upward, it seemed to Ted that their progress was exceedingly slow. The *nak-kar* rider kept his bright head lamp lighted until they reached the surface, where it was no longer necessary. Then, with a wave of his hand, he indicated a vertical band of green light which emerged from the northeastern horizon, and made a circle of green light on the face of the earth.

With an answering wave of farewell, Ted seized the controls and gave the Lunite such an exhibition of speed as must have commanded his awe and wonder.

Flying high above the moon's surface in the tenuous lunar atmosphere, he traveled at a speed far surpassing that of the bullet cars which the Lunites used in traversing the glazed ray-valleys. As he progressed toward Copernicus he noticed that the valleys which radiated from Tycho grew fewer and further apart, and that there were other glazed valleys coming down from the north. While the former had appeared a glistening white in the sunlight, these latter were yellowish in

appearance, evidently due to the fact that they were roofed with amber instead of clear glass. The great green ray, the projector of which it was his purpose to destroy, gave him the exact location of Copernicus and showed him that these yellow ray-valleys ramified from that place.

He was less than a hundred miles from his objective when the spherical bulk of a lunar flying globe suddenly loomed ahead. A deadly green ray instantly shot toward him, but Ted was now ready to profit by his first experience with the war globes of P'an-ku.

Instead of continuing on his course, he suddenly dropped for a thousand feet, and while manipulating his atomotor with his left hand brought a degravitor gun into play with his right. His aim was true, and the forward revolving disc of the flying globe flashed and disappeared when struck by the invisible rays. The globe instantly made a half turn and commenced a swift nose dive groundward. Before the aft disc could be reversed, Ted aimed his degravitor at this, also, destroying it instantly. A half dozen green rays shot out from various parts of the globe, flashing like the spokes of a giant wheel as the craft hurtled to the ground — then disappeared as a lurid explosion announced the destruction of the ship.

Fearing that, having been seen by the aerial patrol, his presence had been announced by radio, Ted decided to attack at once. He therefore aimed his craft as if it had been a projectile, in a curved trajectory which would carry him at a height of about ten miles over the huge rim of Copernicus, and downward toward the central source of light. With both forward degravitors turned on and the atomotor running at the maximum speed possible in the presence of the tenuous atmospheric gases, the craft instantly became a terrific missile of destruction.

So swiftly did it fly that the view of the rugged, crater-pitted landscape beneath became blurred, despite the great size and sharp detail of the major formations.

Ted spotted his objective before he was above the great outer ring of Copernicus. It was the tallest of the five great central mountain peaks which project upward from the floor

of the crater. The great green ray which was trained on the earth was coming directly from the tip of this peak, and the entire crater of the mighty ring mountain was bathed in a weird green light, evidently reflections of the ray from the glistening walls and peaks.

In a moment Ted was directly over the southwest rim of the huge crater. Instantly, he pointed his craft downward, and the invisible rays of the two forward degravitors struck the peak of the tallest inner mountain — still more than thirty miles away. Even at that distance the telltale flash from the mountain top told him that his aim was true. Then, with degravitors set rigidly in position, he dived straight for his target.

From one of the pits beneath, a green ray of ordinary dimensions suddenly burst forth. Others flashed out, searching the sky for the marauder who had dared this attack on the mighty ray projector of P'an-ku. But Ted was flying so swiftly and his craft was so high in the air and so small that it was not easy for the Lunites to locate him. At the moment they only knew of his presence because the tip of the mountain peak which surrounded their green ray projector was rapidly melting away under the attack of his invisible rays.

As he progressed toward the central peak, Ted noticed that the searching green rays grew thicker and thicker. Suddenly one sheared away the stern of his craft, and with it the rear atomotor outlets. The crippled vehicle was carried forward for a few seconds by its own momentum, but gradually succumbing to the insistent pull of gravity it deviated from its course — wobbled unsteadily, and began to fall groundward.

Releasing his now useless atomotor controls, Ted concentrated his attention on the two forward degravitors. As his ship fell, wobbling this way and that, he kept his two ray guns steadily pointed at the mountain top from which the great green ray emerged. His craft was falling with terrific speed when he had the satisfaction of seeing the green ray wink out, and the section of the mountain top containing what was left of the projecting machinery, topple over, hurtle down the mountainside in an avalanche of debris, and crash to the ground in an enormous cloud of dust and smoke.

But he had not noticed his own proximity to the crater floor. There came a sudden shock that smashed the keel of his craft like an egg shell — then oblivion.

XVII. ALLIANCE

STANDING BEFORE the big radiovisiphone of the President of the United States, in Washington, Roger Sanders waited impatiently for the silencing of all terrestrial stations that he might be tuned in with Ted Dustin's powerful superstation which was to relay a message from the moon.

Presently the signal: "All clear," came through, and Roger, looking into the disc of the President's instrument, saw, as if reflected in a mirror, the huge disc of Ted's radiovisiphone with the operator seated before it manipulating the dials.

Indistinct figures appeared a number of times in the pellucid depths of the great disc, and there were a few unintelligible sounds. Then it suddenly cleared, and Roger and President Whitmore were dazzled, as before, by the appearance of the beautiful Maza with two armored guards and the aged scientist, Vanible Khan.

To the surprise of both, Vanible Khan addressed them in English.

"Despite the powerful interference waves broadcasted by P'an-ku, we have at last succeeded in breaking through," he said. "Do I address friends of Ted Dustin?"

"You are speaking to his superior, President Whitmore of the United States of America, and also to his assistant, Roger Sanders," replied Roger.

"That is indeed fortunate," said the old scientist, smiling. "I am Vanible Khan, chief scientist of Ma Gong, and speak for Her Imperial Majesty, Maza an Ma Gong. She bids me inform you that Ted Dustin left Ultu, her capital, which is situated beneath the crater which you on Du Gong call 'Tycho,' two revolutions of your planet ago. He went with the avowed intention of destroying the projector of the great green ray which was turned on your world. It appears that he has succeeded in destroying the ray, but as he has not returned we assume that he has either been killed or captured.

The ray, as you are no doubt aware, was projected from a central peak of the ring mountain which you call Copernicus. Beneath this mountain is the capital city of P'an-ku, which is called Peilong.

"Since the departure of Ted Dustin, Her Majesty has declared war on P'an-ku. Tonight she will personally conduct a mighty army which will march on Peilong through the subterranean forests. She has not thought it wise to use her *nak-kars* — the flying beasts which can live for nine of your days without air — because of their slowness and inefficiency compared to P'an-ku's flying globes.

"She intends to attack Peilong in five of your days. If you, the friends of Ted Dustin, have a way to simultaneously strike from above, it is possible that we may save him or avenge his death, and subdue P'an-ku, thus bringing about peace between the peoples of Du Gong and the yellow race of Ma Gong.

"Her Majesty awaits your answer."

"I have a way," replied Roger, half turning toward the President as he spoke. "The powerful interplanetary battleship we are building will be ready in four days. With your permission I will then leave for the moon, and will attack Peilong in conjunction with the army of Her Majesty."

"But what of the flying globes of P'an-ku?" asked the President. "He may have hundreds of them, in which case your task will be hopeless, and we'll have nobody left to run the Dustin factory."

"The factory can run under the directions of our superintendents whether Ted and I are present or not," replied Roger, "and there will be no let-down in production if we never return, as long as money and materials are supplied. As for flying globes, if P'an-ku has thousands of them, I will still be glad to go, counting it a small sacrifice to risk my life in this mighty battleship when Ted has braved the same dangers in his tiny, one-man flier."

"Go then, with my best wishes for a glorious victory and a safe return," replied the President. "If it were not for the demands of the nation which especially require my presence in this crisis, I should like to go with you."

"You may tell Her Majesty," said Roger, addressing Vanible Khan, "that I will attack P'an-ku from above in five days."

Maza evidently understood his reply, for she smiled and spoke for the first time during the interview.

"In five days, then, Roger Sanders, I will meet you in the imperial palace at Peilong, and may we be in time to save Ted Dustin."

The disc suddenly became blank, and Roger, after bidding farewell to President Whitmore, hurried away to his electroplane, which Bevans had ready for the trip to Chicago.

XVIII. TORTURE CHAMBERS

PROFESSOR EDERSON was small but wiry, and it took him but a moment to squirm from the grasp of the Lunite who had seized him from behind after he dropped a note addressed to General Fu Yen from the bridge of the flying globe. Turning, he beheld Lin Ching, his features contorted with rage. He whipped out a sword, and in his great anger would surely have beheaded the professor then and there, had not Kwan Tsu Khan appeared on the scene and seized his sword arm from behind.

"What's this, Lin Ching?" he asked. "Has the prisoner attempted to escape, that you threaten his life?"

"Worse than that, my lord Kwan Tsu Khan," replied Lin Ching. "The miserable worm just dropped something to someone in the crowd and refuses to tell me what it was."

"I refused nothing," cut in the professor. "This man came up behind me and, seizing me by the neck, shook me. As I dislike being shaken, I twisted from his grasp."

"Perhaps then, you will tell *me* what it was that you dropped to the person in the crowd." said Kwan Tsu Khan.

"To be sure," replied the professor. "I dropped a note, written to a friend of mine who lives here."

"And what did the note say?"

"That," replied the professor, "is strictly my business."

"I will make it *my* business to find out when I have more time," said Kwan Tsu Khan with his suave smile. "In the

meantime, Lin Ching, put the prisoner where he can send no more notes. I go, now, to confer with our allies."

Lin Ching bowed and grinned. Then he pointed with his sword to the diamond-shaped door behind him.

"Enter, Am-Er-I-Khan," he commanded, "and follow the passageway until I bid you halt."

The professor did as he was told, and was eventually stopped before a door near the opposite side of the globe.

Taking a bunch of keys from his belt pouch, Lin Ching unlocked the door, then bade his prisoner enter.

The savant found himself in a small, windowless room, faintly illuminated by a tiny dome light overhead. In the center of the room was a chair, suspended on powerful coil springs. Other springs connected it to the floor, and still others to the walls on four sides.

"Be seated," ordered Lin Ching.

No sooner had the professor seated himself in the chair than his captor proceeded to strap him down securely. His hands were so fastened to the arms of the chair that he was unable to reach the fastenings of the straps which held his body, legs and feet.

Having completed his work, Lin Ching stood back with arms akimbo and grinned.

"His lordship will make you glad to talk when he returns," he said. "In the meantime I wish you pleasant and profound meditations."

With that, he stepped out and closed and locked the door. A moment later the dome light snapped off, and the savant was left, alone and helpless, in total darkness.

How long he hung there in his suspended chair in complete silence the professor had no means of knowing. Suddenly, however, sounds came to him which indicated that projectiles of some sort were striking the outer shell of the craft. Despite his predicament, he smiled to himself in the darkness, for this was, he felt sure, the reply of his friend, General Fu Yen to his hastily written note.

He felt the craft dart suddenly upward a short time thereafter, and was thankful for the coiled springs which surrounded his chair. Had they not been there to absorb the

shock, he would have been badly injured if not killed outright by so sudden a movement of the globe.

For some time he could sense the quick movements of the craft hither and thither, while projectiles rattled intermittently against its armor. Then it settled down to a swift sustained flight and the bombardment ceased.

The even flight was maintained for several hours. Then projectiles rattled once more against the shell of the craft. This second bombardment lasted for perhaps five minutes. Then the globe shot suddenly upward with such terrific speed that, protected though he was by the coiled springs, the professor lost consciousness.

When he regained his senses once more, the savant was being unstrapped from his chair by Lin Ching. Another Lunite was holding a bottle of some pungent smelling liquid beneath his nostrils. The sharp fumes smarted them, and he jerked his head back to escape the pain, whereupon Lin Ching smiled.

"So you flinch at the smell of *sarvadine*, ah, Am-Er-I-Khan? It will be a pleasure to watch you when the real torture begins."

"Where are we?" asked the professor, noticing that the motion of the globe had ceased.

"In Peilong, the capitol city of His Imperial Majesty, P'an-ku," replied Lin Ching.

"Excellent!" exclaimed the professor, whereupon Lin Ching, dumfounded, prodded him with his sword and ordered him to get out into the passageway and keep moving.

At his first step he bumped his head on the ceiling, then fell to the floor in a heap. Convinced that he was indeed on the moon, by this demonstration of the lessened gravity pull, he carefully got up, and made his way forward with a peculiar, toddling gait that seemed to amuse his captors.

As he emerged from the diamond-shaped doorway in the shell of the craft, he saw that the great globe had settled into a circular depression in the level floor of a great dock made to contain its lower half. All around him similar depressions were occupied by craft of exactly the same size and type. It seemed that P'an-ku had a quite formidable armada.

Standing on the dock with several other round bodied Lunites was Kwan Tsu Khan, his face bandaged and one arm in a sling. With him there also stood another, slender of figure, whom the professor instantly recognized.

"Dr. Wu!" he exclaimed in surprise. "How did you get here?"

"I had the honor of being your fellow passenger, professor," replied the Chinaman, bowing slightly.

"Come! Over the railing, worm!" grated Lin Ching, with another prod of his sword.

The professor quickly vaulted the railing, alighting on the dock.

"You will feed the Am-Er-I-Khan, Lin Ching," commanded Kwan Tsu Khan, after the latter had followed his prisoner over the railing. "I will send for him later." Then he turned and walked away, chatting amiably with Dr. Wu, while the other Lunites followed at a respectful distance behind.

The savant was conducted off the docks, which were lighted by globes suspended from the arched ends of gracefully constructed lamp posts. He could not determine the nature of the light, which was yellow in color, and seemed to come from a liquid with which the globes were filled. Far above him, he caught glimpses of the rugged top of the great arched cavern in which the lunar city was situated, particularly at points where white stalactites reflected the light from the globes below.

After leaving the docks, he threaded many narrow and crooked streets. The houses, which were set closely together, were mostly octagonal or cylindrical in shape, and the popular fashion in doors and windows seemed to be the diamond shape — one hinge only at the left corner of the diamond, and one catch at the right. The roofs were sharply pointed, and were either of yellow metal or heavy stone. He wondered why roofs should be needed at all in an underground city, and especially roofs of such heavy construction, until he saw a fragment of a stalactite fall on one of the metal roofs and glance off, alighting in the street not far from a group of round bodied Lunites.

The lighting system in the city was the same as at the docks — endless rows of suspended globes containing a substance which radiated yellow light.

Presently the professor and his captor emerged from the narrow streets and entered a broad open park, or plaza, planted with luminous trees and shrubs of variegated forms and hues. Standing in the center of this park was a huge building, octagonal in shape, and crowned with a narrower, pagoda-like structure, the point of which reached nearly to the pendant stalactites on the arched vault above. The lower part of the building was of red stone, but the upper part was of burnished yellow metal surrounded by rings of yellow globes and reflecting their light with such brilliance as to light up a considerable portion of the city as well as the upper reaches of the cavern.

The professor was hustled into a door at the ground level of this building, and down a spiral ramp into a dimly lighted room where a number of men, some of the round bodied yellow race, and others of the white lunar race, were chained by collars around their necks to rings in the wall. He was promptly clapped into a vacant place, and a burly jailer whose touch was far from gentle, snapped and locked a metal collar around his neck.

"You will feed this contemptible maggot," said Lin Ching to the jailer. "Then report to me."

The burly fellow saluted, and Lin Ching withdrew. Presently the jailer went out and returned with a bowl and a cup which he set before the professor. The bowl contained some chunks of stewed fungus of a leathery texture though not unpleasant flavor, and the cup, water with a slightly alkaline taste.

The savant was both hungry and thirsty, and disposed of his meagre rations with gusto before Lin Ching came to him.

"Now, O pestilent spawn of a grub," said Lin Ching, seizing the professor's neck chain which the jailer had unfastened from the wall, and giving it a vicious jerk, "we will learn the fate of one who defies the servants of the mighty P'an-ku."

After being dragged up the spiral ramp and half choked

from the pressure of his metal collar, Professor Ederson was hustled through a maze of hallways and passageways to a place where Kwan Tsu Khan stood before a great, diamond-shaped doorway, guarded by two armored warriors who carried spears with heads like long-toothed buzz saws, while from the belt of each there depended a sword on the left and a ray-projector on the right.

The Khan waited until a brilliantly robed major domo bade him enter — then took the prisoner's chain from the hands of Lin Ching and led him into a large, brilliantly lighted audience chamber, the walls of which were magnificently decorated with gaudily colored bas-reliefs of hunting and battle scenes in which the round-bodied moon men and strange animals and dragons figured conspicuously.

Seated on a massive cushioned throne, placed on a raised platform at the far end of the room, his great round belly cradled between his spindly knees, was P'an-ku, ruler of the yellow skinned moon men. Standing to the right and left of the dais were guards, richly clad courtiers, and liveried attendants.

The Khan slowly led his prisoner to a place before the throne. Then, dropping to his knees, he pressed his forehead and the palms of his hands to the floor.

"Rise, Kwan Tsu Khan," said P'an-ku. "What have you here?"

"I have brought you the first captive of war from Du Gong, O Lord of the Universe," replied Kwan Tsu Khan.

"You are slightly in error, Kwan Tsu Khan," replied P'an-ku, twisting one end of his drooping moustache, and leering. "You have brought the *second* prisoner of war from Du Gong. The first is already chained in our deepest dungeon for such time as we care to keep him there, while devising a lingering death suitable to his case."

"A prisoner from Du Gong? Your humble servant craves indulgence, for he fails to understand, O King of the Age."

"It does not matter," replied P'an-ku. "We will attend to the prisoner before us. Your report can wait, although I observe that you have been wounded, and that two of the

other observer globes have not returned. Let us dispose of this prisoner, first. Who is he?"

"The miserable microbe, who calls himself Am-Er-I-Khan, fell on the bridge of our globe from a ship of Du Gong which we destroyed, and was taken captive by one of my men. When we had reached the capital of the land of the descendants of your illustrious ancestor, he dropped a message to someone in the crowd below the craft. Shortly thereafter, when we were in conference with the powers of that land, a revolt broke out in which eleven of our men were slain. Your humble slave barely escaped with his life, having been left for dead.

"A man of that land who remains loyal to Your Majesty, and who calls himself 'Dr. Wu,' was also left for dead, but being less badly wounded than your servant, assisted him in getting back to the craft. After taking vengeance on the revolting city, we departed for the other side of Du Gong, where —"

"That part of your story can wait, Kwan Tsu Khan," interrupted P'an-ku. "I take it that you suspect this Am-Er-I-Khan of having fomented the revolution in the land of our former allies."

"Your wisdom, O Sole Vicar of the Great Lord Sun, is as brilliant and as penetrating as His rays."

P'an-ku glared down at the professor.

"What have you to say for yourself, Am-Er-I-Khan?" he asked.

"Nothing," replied the professor.

"You see, O Light of Knowledge, this vile father of many crawling maggots admits his guilt."

"I see," replied P'an-ku. "Ho, Tzien Khan. Take the prisoner to the torture rooms and give him the death of the many water drops."

The Lunite designated as Tzien Khan stepped forth and took the professor's chain from the hand of Kwan Tsu Khan. Although the grizzled hairs of his long, stringy moustache and the many wrinkles of his parchment like countenance betokened great age, he seemed sprightly and quite muscular. His sadistic grin, as he jerked the prisoner away

to execute the order of the monarch, revealed a single, fang-like tooth in the upper jaw, and but two below.

Upon hearing his sentence, Professor Ederson had expected the slow, torturing death of having water dripped on his forehead. He was surprised, therefore, when he learned the true nature of the Lunite death of the many water drops.

After being led through a large room filled with many instruments of torture, and resonant with the shrieks of the victims of the wrath of P'an-ku, he was conducted to a small anteroom where two men, under the direction of Tzien Khan, removed his metal collar and seated him in a heavy metal chair which was bolted to the floor. These two men, as well as the others whose work it was to torture the prisoners, had their faces hideously painted with rings and lines of red and blue pigment.

When they had the professor strapped securely in the chair, they measured his head. Then they went out, and presently returned with a metal helmet with a ring in the top. The helmet fitted his skull almost as tightly as if it had been made to order for him, and a metal chin piece which was fastened beneath the ears on either side was fitted in place and secured. A metal cable with hooks on each end was next passed through two stout pulleys suspended from the ceiling, one of which was directly above his head and the other about three feet in front of it.

One end of the cable was hooked through the ring in his helmet. Then one of the men lifted a large, cylindrical vessel with a funnel-like opening and basket-like handle at the top, and hooked it on the other end.

This done, Tzien Khan turned a valve, and a drop of water fell into the vessel. Noting its fall he watched a small instrument, evidently a chronometer, which he took from his belt pouch, until a second had fallen. For some time he continued to adjust the valve, until the falling drops seemed timed to his liking. Then he dismissed his two attendants and turned to the professor with his cruel, toothless grin.

"Farewell, O spawn of a slimy worm," he said. "In your slow and painful passing, meditate on the folly of opposing your puny will to that of the Lord of the Universe."

The professor was unable to make a reply, even had he desired to do so, for the weight of the vessel had pulled the helmet and chin piece so high that speech was impossible. The cords of his neck began to pain him sharply, and he tried to think of something which would take his mind off the pain.

With the aid of his wrist watch, he calculated that the water was dripping into the container at the rate of a drop every minute. A dram an hour. Three ounces in a day. How much weight could the cords and muscles withstand? How long had he to live?

XIX. DUNGEONS OF DARKNESS

TED DUSTIN'S first glimmer of returning consciousness after his space flier had crashed with him in the crater of Copernicus, was a queer, swinging sensation.

He opened his eyes and saw the broad shoulders of an armored warrior, on one of which rested a pole. The other end of the pole was carried by another warrior behind, and he was swinging in a net, each end of which was fastened to the pole. Two more warriors armed with long spears with heads that resembled long-toothed buzz saws, and with swords and ray projectors belted about their waists, walked on either side. He could hear the clanking armor of many more behind. An officer, in gaudy armor, walked ahead.

The young scientist saw that he was being carried through a beautiful garden of luminous trees, shrubs and plants, toward a tall, hexagonal building crowned with a pagoda-like structure of yellow metal, brilliantly lighted.

Presently the column came to a halt before a broad flight of steps leading up to a great diamond-shaped door. Standing on the lower step, surrounded by his courtiers, slaves and attendants, he recognized the huge rotund figure of P'an-ku.

At a command from the leader he was lowered to the ground. Then the two men who had been carrying him seized him on each side, and jerking him erect, dragged him before the monarch.

"O, Vicar of the Great Lord Sun," intoned the officer. "I

bring you alive, the presuming parasite from Du Gong who destroyed the experimental ray projector."

"By the sacred bones of my worshipful ancestors!" exclaimed P'an-ku, peering down at the prisoner over his puffy cheeks, and twisting his long, stringy moustache. "If Dr. Wu sent us the correct description, it is none other than the upstart who calls himself a scientist, Ted Dustin."

"And if I mistake not," replied Ted, smiling, "you are P'an-ku, the master of bombast who calls himself 'Lord of the Universe.'"

"O, slimy worm and wriggling maggot of Du Gong," grated P'an-ku. "Think you that you have performed a great service for your people by destroying my experimental ray projector? Know then, that I am building, and will have completed in less than five of your days, a projector with ten times its power. You could have destroyed it as easily as the other, but you have merely saved me the effort of dismantling the smaller projector."

"Everything in its turn," replied Ted, feigning a complacency he did not feel.

"As to your death," continued P'an-ku, closely watching his prisoner for signs of fear, "I will ponder over it. It was you who destroyed Ur — you who defied me — you who thought to break my power by destroying a small experimental projector. I must have leisure to devise a punishment befitting your crimes."

He turned to the officer who had brought up the prisoner, saying:

"Away with him, to the dungeons of eternal darkness."

Ted was hustled away to a small side entrance on the ground level of the palace, along a hallway, through a torture chamber where victims shrieked their anguish and hideously painted torturers laughed at their agonies, then down a spiral ramp dimly lighted by small globes of luminous yellow liquid, which appeared almost endless, so deeply did it penetrate the damp rock.

Presently, when it seemed to the young scientist that he must be at least a mile beneath the palace, the two men who

were dragging him halted at a sharp command from the officer who led the way.

The officer then lighted a head lamp on the front of his pagoda-like helmet, and plunged into a dark hole in the wall, followed by the two warriors with their prisoner.

They were in a hand-hewn cavern, roughly circular in form. Cut in the wall at irregular intervals were the openings of passageways which led away from the cavern in all directions. The officer led the way into one of these passageways which was filled with a horrible, sickening stench that became stronger as they advanced.

Presently the passageway widened, and the cause of the foul odors became apparent, as Ted saw, leaning against the back of a niche cut in the wall at the right, a bloated, festering corpse, chained by the neck to a ring in the wall in such a manner that had the person been living he would neither have been able to stand erect nor lie down.

In niches on both sides of the passageway there now came into view more corpses in all stages of decay from cadavers of the freshly dead to mere skeltons. The floors of all the niches were littered with human bones, as was the passageway itself, but the warriors stepped over them or kicked them out of the way without notice.

Suddenly, from the gloom ahead, there came a horrible, blood-curdling shriek, followed by peal after peal of demoniac laughter.

"Aiee-yah! Ha! Ha! Ha! Aiee-yah! Men and light! Light and life! Darkness and death! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Shen Ho still lives in body," whispered one of the soldiers to the other, "but his mind is dead."

"A mighty mind while it lived," replied the other. "No puny intellect could have given us back the green ray of our ancestors."

"Yet none but a fool would dare oppose P'an-ku, Lord of the Universe," countered the first.

"All wise men are fools in some things," was the reply.

A moment later Ted saw the madman, squatting in his filthy niche and combing his stringy gray beard with bony, clawlike fingers. A few dirty shreds of clothing still clung

to his wasted body — clothing which had evidently been made from the richest of materials of the kind worn by great nobles.

"Aiee!" he shrieked. "Another victim of the darkness!"

The officer had stopped, and was peering into the niche opposite that of the madman. A skeleton, on which there hung a few unclean rags that had once been clothing, half leaned against the wall, the white skull nesting in the metal collar which hung at the end of the short, stout chain fastened to the wall.

"This one will do," he said, and entering, kicked the moulding bones into a corner with one foot while he shook the chain to dislodge the skull from the collar.

With a key taken from his belt pouch, the officer unlocked the heavy collar and sprung it open. Then, while the two warriors held the prisoner in position, he snapped it on his neck, locked it, and replaced the key in his belt pouch.

"I leave you in distinguished company, O wise fool of Du Gong," said the officer. "Dead men who have been doughty warriors and mighty Khans, and a madman who was once the mightiest and wisest of all khans. Farewell."

Ted, who was now chained so he could neither stand erect nor lie down, squatted on his haunches among the bones of his filthy den, and watched the light from the head lamp of the departing officer grow more dim, until it finally disappeared and he was left in complete blackness.

Then he reached back to open his suit of insulating armor, which fastened in the back with an arrangement somewhat resembling a terrestrial zipper. With this armor off it would be an easy matter for him to get rid of his collar and chain, and he would have a fighting chance for his life, as his two pistol degravitors were underneath the armor and over the court suit he had been wearing when he had suddenly decided to attack the green ray projector in his flier.

To his consternation, however, the fastening would not budge. Like its terrestrial cousin the zipper, it worked beautifully when in good order, but when jammed it proved ten times as stubborn. Evidently it had been bent out of shape

when his ship crashed with him in the crater. He worked futilely at it for more than two hours, then gave up the attempt as hopeless.

Presently a new idea occurred to him, and he began picking and pulling at the fuzzy exterior of his armor on his right side. If he could only make a hole big enough to get his hand on the pistol degravitor that pressed against his thigh the rest would be easy. But the armor proved as baffling as its fastenings, for interwoven with its tough fibres were tiny metal wires of extraordinary strength. He was still picking hopelessly at these wires when the madman in the cell across from him, who had been quiet up to this time, spoke.

"Who are you, white man?" he asked.

Surprised at the calm tones of this perfectly sane question, Ted replied:

"Men call me Ted Dustin."

"A peculiar name," mused Shen Ho. "From what part of Ma Gong do you come?"

"I am from Du Gong," replied Ted.

"From Du Gong! Are you mad, or can it be that I am as mad as I have pretended to be? If you are from Du Gong how did you get here?"

"In my space flier," answered Ted.

"You are a scientist?"

"Yes."

"I, too, am a scientist. I rediscovered the secret of the green ray of our ancestors, after it had been lost for thousands of years. It was my idea to use the ray for defense, but P'an-ku decided to use it for conquest. I objected. That is why I am here — have been here for more than a year. He would have killed me long ago by torture had it not been that he thought he might want to use my brain for his benefit later. As I have nothing left to live for, I feign madness in the presence of the guards, hoping that my execution will be ordered and I may be released from this horrible existence — this living death. Why has P'an-ku sent you here?"

"I am his prisoner of war," replied Ted, and recounted all that had happened from the time he had fired his pro-

jectile at the moon. It was a relief to have someone to talk to there in the stinking darkness.

"Many strange things can happen in a year," said Shen Ho, when Ted had finished his story. "And to think, he has used not only my invention, but the inventions of my two younger brothers for a war of conquest. My brother Wen Ho, who is five years younger than I, invented the flying globe. My brother, Fen Ho, who is seven years my junior, was the inventor of the powerful explosive projectiles and firing mechanism. We of the house of Ho spent our lives and our talents on these inventions in order that our people might have adequate defensive weapons and live in peace forever. But P'an-ku thought differently about these things, and his word is law."

"Did he jail your brothers, also?" asked Ted.

"They were condemned to these dungeons at the same time as I," replied Shen Ho, "but we were all chained in separate passageways. I know not whether they are living or dead."

"If you found an opportunity to escape, what would you do?" asked Ted.

"First I would search for my brothers and attempt to rescue them or assure myself that they had perished. This accomplished, I would seek P'an-ku."

"And then?"

"And then, the Lord Sun willing, P'an-ku should die."

"I have the means of escape at hand, yet cannot reach them." said Ted, explaining the nature and position of his two pistol degravitors. "If I could but get my hand on one of these weapons, I could destroy our fetters. Then we could help each other."

For some time Shen Ho was silent. Then he suddenly exclaimed:

"I have a way!"

"How?"

"By persistent rubbing, human teeth will sever that wire."

"But I can't bite my own hip," replied Ted. "That's out."

"There are several skulls in your cell," said Shen Ho, "and in the jaws are teeth."

"Right!" exclaimed Ted. "We have a saying on Du Gong that two heads are better than one."

"And you will find," replied Shen Ho, "that if the first set of teeth wears out, two or three skulls are better than one. When and if you run out of skulls I have plenty more over here."

After groping about in the darkness for some time, Ted finally secured a skull, tore the jaw bone loose, and began sawing at the armor over his right hip. It was slow work. The wires were tougher by far than he had thought possible, and as Shen Ho had predicted, the teeth in the jaw bone he used were being ground away. When he had worn them down to the bone after many hours of patient labor, he discarded the lower jaw and went to work with the upper set of teeth. These, also, were nearly worn away with but slight effect on the armor, when a light suddenly appeared far down the passageway.

"It is a slave with our food and drink," whispered Shen Ho. "Cease your labors until he has gone. I will feign madness, as usual."

Ted laid the skull on the floor and sat down with his back against the wall, while Shen Ho laughed and shrieked until the whole cavern resounded with his weird cries.

The slave, a yellow, round-bodied Lunite who wore a light strapped to his forehead, a long, loose shirt of some coarse material, and straw sandals, set a bowl of stewed fungus and a large cup of water before each prisoner. Although he was without appetite in his ill- smelling surroundings, Ted choked down the fungus and drank the water, not knowing how soon he might again be offered food and drink.

When the prisoners had finished their frugal meal the slave took the bowls and cups and departed, leaving them in total darkness once more.

Ted picked up a skull, the position of which he had marked while eating his meal, tore off the jaw bone, and resumed work on the armor. When he felt sure the slave was out of

earshot, he asked Shen Ho how often food and drink were served.

"The slave comes once in a rotation of your world," replied Shen Ho. "Our world moves so slowly on its axis that we use the rotation of yours to mark our measurement of time. We have our chronometers, of course, but your world is the great chronometer in the sky by which our own are guided and corrected. I had a small timepiece when I was brought here, but it ceased to function long ago and I gave it to a slave as a bribe for some few morsels of better food than is sent here regularly. A short time thereafter, that slave was chained in the niche you now occupy. He cursed me when he told me he had been caught with my chronometer and forced to confess his defection. Being quite superstitious, he died from terror in a short time, and it was his skeleton that was kicked into the corner by the guard and his skull that was shaken out of the collar to make a place for you." . . . .

Four times, thereafter, the slave came with food, thus marking the passage of five earth days in all. Ted had used up all the available teeth in his own niche, and was working with the upper set of the last skull which Shen Ho had been able to produce and toss over to him, but although he had cut through many wires in his armor, he was still unable to reach his degravitor.

Suddenly a light, brighter than the headlamp of the slave, appeared at the entrance of the passage way. The clank of arms and the footsteps of mailed warriors resounded through the cavern.

"Where have they hidden this miserable worm from Du Gong?" asked a voice.

"The officer said he was far back in the passageway, excellency," answered another.

"I know that first voice," whispered Shen Ho. "It is the cruel Tzien, who is Khan of the Torture Chambers. With him are four of his painted tortures. Work fast, Ted Dustin, or you are doomed."

Ted scraped frantically at the remaining wires which kept him from reaching his degravitor. Several snapped, and he

attempted to insert his hand, but the opening was still too small.

"Hurry!" called Shen Ho. "They are almost here!"

Gripping the skull in both hands, Ted scraped in frenzied haste while the footfalls and clanking armor grew louder. More wires snapped, yet he could not get his hand in the opening.

Before he could move, Tzien Khan, with his cruel features contorted in a grin of sadistic delight, stepped into view followed by four of his brawny, hideously painted torturers. Then Shen Ho howled and laughed, and muttered of light and life, and of darkness and death.

XX. TRAPPED

P'AN-KU, HIS hands clasped about his ample equatorial region, leaned back in his luxuriously cushioned throne and listlessly contemplated the humped figure of his major domo who, with palms and forehead pressed to the floor before the dais, awaited permission to speak.

"Now what low person disturbs our meditations?" demanded P'an-ku.

"O, worshipful Lord of the Universe," replied the major domo, "Kai Lo, Khan of Scouts, begs leave to impart tidings."

"Admit him," said P'an-ku. Then he turned to Dr. Wu, who stood at the right of the throne, having advanced himself in the graces of the monarch he regarded almost as a god, and said: "I presume he will tell me that the white Princess is about to storm the city. I knew this five days ago when my spies in Ultu informed me of her pact with the worm of Du Gong who called himself Roger Sanders."

Kai Lo Khan, a short individual with an oval body and thin, crafty features, entered and prostrated himself before the throne.

"Speak," commanded P'an-ku.

"O, Paragon of Wisdom and Fountain of All Authority," said Kai Lo Khan, "the army of the Princess Maza is surrounding the city. With her are a hundred thousand *nak-kar* cavalry and five hundred thousand foot."

"Dolt!" thundered P'an-ku. "I knew all this was to be five days ago, and am prepared."

"But Majesty, that is not all. She has sent a party to the western gate of the city under a banner of truce."

"Ah! She would parley. Go then to the gate and take her message."

Again prostrating himself, Kai Lo Khan hastily departed.

Not more than twenty minutes elapsed before he returned and made obeisance.

"I have brought the message of the Princess, O Vicar of the Sun," said he, producing a scroll.

"Read it," commanded P'an-ku.

Kai Lo Khan unrolled the scroll, cleared his throat, and read:

Her Imperial Majesty, Maza an Ma Gong
to
His Royal Highness, P'an-ku an Peilong

Greeting:

Surrender the person of Ted Dustin, living and unharmed, and Peilong will be spared. Refuse, and my army will destroy it utterly.

Maza an Ma Gong

"Tell her," thundered P'an-ku, "that Ted Dustin will this day be made to suffer the death of the hot oil. Tell her further, that we are prepared for her attack, and that —"

"Pardon, O just and mighty Dictator of the Universe!" It was Dr. Wu who had interrupted. The courtiers looked at him in amazement, apparently expecting P'an-ku to have him executed for his temerity, but he continued. "May your worthless slave from Du Gong suggest a plan?"

"Speak," replied P'an-ku.

"Would it please Your Majesty to have the white Princess as a prisoner?"

"Nothing would suit me better," replied P'an-ku. "Tzien Khan, here, could very quickly persuade her to become my queen, could you not, my Khan of the Torture Chambers?"

"Assuredly, O King of the Age, if she should be so foolish as to need such persuasion," replied Tzien Khan with a bow.

"After which," continued P'an-ku, "with her armies and her wealth at my disposal, I could quickly bring both Du Gong and Lu Gong under my undisputed sway. But what is your plan, Dr. Wu?"

"It is apparent from her message," said the wily doctor, "that the Princess loves this Ted Dustin. If the prisoner, therefore, or someone purporting to be the prisoner, were sent out, she would not overlook an opportunity for speech with him."

"Very likely," replied P'an-ku.

"I suggest therefore," continued the crafty doctor, "that you dress one of your white prisoners who is about the size of Ted Dustin in a suit of insulating armor and glass helmet of the kind worn by the people of Ultu. Send a note to the Princess stating that you will constitute Ted Dustin your messenger for a peace parley at a point half way between the western gate and the front line of her army, stipulating that she be accompanied by not more than ten unmounted men, and that a like number will accompany Ted Dustin.

"Men can be posted at suitable points along the wall with green ray projectors to lay down a barrage at a prearranged signal. This will prevent her from getting back to her army, or prevent the army from reaching her. In the meantime, her guard can easily be destroyed and the Princess taken prisoner."

"What think you of this plan, Kai Lo Khan?" asked P'an-ku.

"It sounds feasible, O Bright and Shining Cousin of the Sun," replied the Khan of Scouts, cautiously.

"And you, Tzien Khan?"

"I believe it would work, O Lord of Worlds," replied the Khan of Torturers.

"We will try it," decided P'an-ku. "You, Tzien Khan, will take one of the Ultuan prisoners who resembles Ted Dustin in physical proportions and dress him in a suit of the armor we took when we captured a troop of the surface scouts of the white princess.

"You, Kai Lo Khan, will go to Chu Yan, Khan of my army, inform him of our plans, and see that he has men

with ray projectors suitably posted on the walls and ten men ready to accompany the prisoner to the meeting place. I will send a messenger with a note to the Princess, at once.

"And, Tzien Khan. When you have prepared a prisoner to represent the young scientist of Du Gong, you may take Ted Dustin from the dungeons of eternal darkness to the torture chambers, and there inflict on him the death of the hot oil. I had thought to delay his death and prolong his torture indefinitely, but with the prospect of the honor of a visit from the fair Princess who foolishly believes she loves him, it will be better to put him permanently out of her reach at once.

"Now go, both of you." . . . .

Seated on the back of her great, fighting *nak-kar* in one of the glades of the luminous forest which surrounded the city of Peilong, Maza waited impatiently for P'an-ku reply to her message. She wore a suit and helmet of shining white armor, and a sword and red ray projector depended from the belt which encircled her slender waist. Beside her, similarly armored and mounted, was the aged Vanible Khan.

Ranged before her were line after line of her foot soldiers, and more, steadily coming up from the rear, were being hurried into place by their officers as the army encircled the city. Her *nak-kar* cavalry had deployed for attack, and the huge supply wagons, drawn by great, lumbering, wingless dragons, were rumbling into position.

"P'an-ku ponders long over his reply, Your Majesty," said Vanible Khan.

"It may be that he does not intend to make one," replied Maza. "He seems, however, to have respected my banner of truce."

"I would not rest too strongly on the belief that Ted Dustin is alive," said Vanible Khan. "If he escaped the green rays of the defenders when he attacked the great projector it would be amazing, but if P'an-ku were to capture him and spare his life it would indeed be astounding."

"Nevertheless, I shall go on believing him alive until I have proof to the contrary," answered Maza. "I seem to feel it, here." She pressed her hand over her heart.

Sailing gracefully over the treetops, a *nak-kar* alighted in the glade. Its rider dismounted, rushed to where Maza sat in her saddle, made obeisance, and presented a scroll.

"A message from P'an-ku," he announced.

The Princess eagerly seized and unrolled the missive, hastily scanning its contents.

"He lives! Ted Dustin lives!"

"And will P'an-ku surrender him without a struggle?" asked Vanible Khan.

"I will read the message," she replied.

His Imperial Majesty, P'an-ku an Ma Gong tu Du Gong
to
Her Royal Highness, Maza an Ulta

If you care to meet him in person, Ted Dustin will tell you the terms I propose. He will advance half way to your front lines, accompanied by ten of my guards, who will slay him at the first sign of treachery. Meet him there, on foot, with ten of your unmounted warriors, and perhaps a satisfactory settlement can be arranged.

P'an-ku an Ma Gong tu Du Gong.

"The ruler of Peilong assumes mighty titles since he has acquired the green ray and the fighting globe," said Vanible Khan. "Emperor of Ma Gong and Du Gong, indeed! He will soon have the other planets, their satellites, and the Lord Sun under his domination, if words can do the trick. And he insultingly addressed Your Majesty as 'Ruler of Ulta,' ignoring your greater title."

"I will overlook that for the present — to save Ted Dustin," replied Maza.

"But, Your Majesty," remonstrated the aged scientist. "Don't you see that this bloated monster is setting a trap for you — a trap baited with the man you love?"

"Trap or no trap," said Maza, "I am going."

"Majesty, I implore you not to go. For the sake of Ulta — for the sake of the millions of subjects who love you —"

"Enough!" she said. "The terms are fair enough — a trap well nigh impossible. I will be accompanied by ten of my

warriors, who can, if need be, account for the ten accompanying Ted Dustin. I will be within plain sight and ray-range of the advance guard of my army. They will be instructed to protect me with a ray barrage at the slightest sign of trickery."

"But, Majesty —"

"Not another word. I leave my army in your care until my return. If I do not come back — if I am killed or captured — attack the city at once, and continue the fight until Peilong is utterly destroyed. Goodbye, my worthy Khan and lifelong friend."

Grief stricken, Vanible Khan bowed his head in farewell obeisance, while tears trickled down his furrowed cheeks. When he raised his tear-dimmed eyes the *nak-kar* with his beloved young ruler was disappearing over the treetops.

Alighting just behind the front line of her troops Maza dismounted, tossed her reins to a soldier, and addressed a young officer who ran quickly to her side and made obeisance.

"Pick me ten of your bravest soldiers at once," she said. "They will go with me for a parley midway between my front line and the city gate. Instruct the men in the front line to be ready to throw a ray barrage around me at the least indication of treachery."

She watched the gate while the young officer selected the men who were to go with her. One by one they took up a position in a line behind her.

Presently the gate opened, and she saw a man the size and build of Ted Dustin emerge therefrom, followed by ten of P'an-ku's soldiers. She had last seen Ted attired in one of the insulated suits with glass helmet which her people wore for surface travel, and this man was so attired. Her heart leaped with joy, and as she went out expecting to meet the man she loved, followed by her ten soldiers, there was not the slightest doubt in her mind that this was really Ted Dustin.

As she drew nearer to the man who was coming toward her, Maza felt that there was something about him which was not just as it should be. What is it? Ah, his gait. He did not walk with long, easy strides like those of the earth man, whose muscles, accustomed to a greater gravity pull, involuntarily carried him much further at each step than the

stride of the most athletic of moon men. Besides, if he felt as she did, he would hurry to meet her, in which case she knew the mighty bounds through space of which he was capable.

For a moment she paused, doubting. Then came the thought that Ted might be adapting his stride to suit that of his captors — might indeed be compelled to do so. Furthermore, the size, build and attire were correct.

When within fifty feet of the man she strained her eyes to see his face in the glass helmet. The light from the luminous forest was quite dim at this point, and the yellow lights from the city were more of a hindrance than a help as they shone in her eyes from behind him without lighting his face.

A distance of twenty feet was reached, and it seemed that if she could not recognize the man he, with the light in his favor, should be able to recognize her.

Suddenly he called out:

"Retreat Majestly, quickly! It is a trap!"

The voice and face she recognized simultaneously. The man was one of her *nak-kar* scout officers she had believed slain in a battle with the flying globes.

Instantly a green ray from the projector of one of the warriors behind him cut him down.

Maza whipped out her own red ray projector and the man who had flashed his green ray disappeared in a sudden burst of flame. Not a second elapsed before her men were drawing their ray projectors, but the nine remaining warriors of P'an-ku were already on guard. The battle commenced with fencing, deadly as it was beautiful — green rays against red, red against green.

Simultaneously, a barrage of green leaped out from the city walls and a barrage of red flashed out from the front rank of Maza's army. Where the rays met they neutralized each other, but enough green rays got through to form a triangle past which Maza and her little party could not retreat, while a similar triangle of red rays made it possible for the warriors of P'an-ku to retreat.

One of Maza's men fell, crumpled to nothingness by a green ray, but as he fell he took with him his opponent in

a brilliant flash of light. Then a ray from the wall, swinging unexpectedly into the little group, cut down three of the white warriors. This left seven red rays, counting Maza's, against eight green rays. With the odds in their favor, the yellow men redoubled their attack. The whites fought back furiously, and in a moment both parties were wiped out with the exceptions of Maza and one of P'an-ku's warriors.

At ray-fencing, the Princess was the equal of any trained soldier in her army, but her opponent, she found, was the most skillful she had ever encountered. His tactics, however, were purely defensive except as he tried to destroy her projector. Evidently his orders had been to bring her in alive. He would feint, swinging his ray as if he meant to strike her down, but never in a direct line with her body. Noticing this, she resolved to stake everything on one long chance. Accordingly, she held her projector away from her — a tempting bait. He swung for the lure, leaving his guard open for but an instant. But in that instant her red ray struck him full in the chest, and he was no more.

While this duel was in progress Maza's men were rushing to her rescue from behind. And P'an-ku's men were pouring out of the city gate to meet them. She was alone in the center of a terrific battle, unable to move more than twenty feet in any direction because of the double ray barrage which surrounded her.

Through the network of rays encompassing her, she saw a detachment of her *nak-kar* cavalry flying swiftly above the heads of her foot soldiers, the riders aiming their ray projectors at the men on the walls and pouring through the gate. Here and there great sections of the wall disappeared in bursts of smoke as the red rays cut through the green barrage.

Although the flying cavalry was doing terrific execution, its casualties were exceedingly heavy. Soon a number of the great beasts were riderless, but more were struck down by the green rays, *nak-kars* and riders falling together on the heads of the soldiers below. These and the fragments of rock and huge stalactites which fell from the roof of the cavern far overhead whenever green or red rays were accidentally

directed too vertically, constituted almost as much of a menace as the rays themselves.

When the first flying detachment was wiped out, a second flew into the breach, and the fighting became doubly furious.

With the assistance of her flying warriors, the foot soldiers were gaining ground when a score of huge flying globes suddenly sailed out from over the city walls. They flew in a V shaped formation, with green rays ten times as powerful as those used by the soldiers, shining from their diamond-shaped port holes.

The *nak-kar* cavalry fought bravely, but unavailingly as this solid wall of deadly green light approached. In less than ten minutes the entire detachment was wiped out. The globes then suddenly descended groundward, their rays forming a solid, impenetrable wall, and cutting off the red barrage rays which had formerly shielded Maza.

Another globe then shot out from over the gate, and before she was aware of its purpose, had dropped a huge net around the Princess which knocked her red ray projector from her hand and entangled her in its meshes. She was drawn swiftly up to the bridge and dragged through one of the diamond-shaped openings while the globe sped swiftly back over the gate. Then, while two warriors held her, an officer whose face was bandaged and whose left arm hung in a sling, took her sword from her and cut the meshes of the net.

With a scarcely perceptible jar, the globe alighted on the ground before a huge building which she instantly recognized from its pictures and descriptions as the palace of P'an-ku. The bridge of the globe leaned against a jutting balcony which was almost on a level with it.

Stepping out of the door, the officer vaulted the railing, alighting on the balcony, and ordered the two soldiers to follow him with the prisoner.

Maza was lifted over the railing and hurried along a corridor which led to a great diamond-shaped door on each side of which two armed guards were posted.

A major domo announced in a loud voice: "Her Royal Highness, Maza an Ultu," and the Princess marched into the throne room between her two guards.

The officer who had captured her advanced and made profound obeisance.

"Well done, Kwan Tsu Khan," said P'an-ku. "Take a place of honor, here on my right hand, and we will speak of your reward later."

The officer bowed his thanks and took a position beside Dr. Wu at the right of the throne. Then P'an-ku raised his hand and the two guards brought the prisoner before the throne, after which each prostrated himself before the monarch and stepped back twenty paces.

Standing there alone in the middle of the floor, surrounded by enemies, Maza looked up unflinchingly into the gloating eyes of the porcine monster on the throne.

P'an-ku rose ponderously and bowed — a ceremony due visiting royalty.

"Welcome to Peilong, Princess of Ultu," he said. "We are deeply grateful for the honor of this unexpected visit."

"What have you done with Ted Dustin, treacherous monster?" she demanded.

P'an-ku smiled evilly, while he deliberately consulted his chronometer.

"By this time," he said, "the worm of Du Gong who calls himself a scientist is undoubtedly dead — that is unless his white skin is so tough as to be impervious to boiling oil."

The face of the Princess turned deathly pale. She swayed, and would have fallen to the floor had not the two guards behind her bounded forward and caught her by the arms.

In a moment, however, she recovered her poise and shook herself free.

"You have ordered the death of Ted Dustin," she said, "but in so doing you have pronounced the doom of Peilong and certified your own death warrant. When my army has finished with Peilong and with you, the dynasty of the P'an-kus will have ended forever. My grandfather made the mistake of granting your father freedom, and I am paying for his error, but the warriors of Ultu will take full vengeance."

P'an-ku rose, and laughed sneeringly.

"Your army will not long survive your lover," he said. "As for Ultu, a hundred of my globes left their hangars

long before your clumsy attack on Peilong commenced, with commands to either capture or destroy the city. With their superior weapons and armament they cannot fail.

"You are hopelessly beaten, O Princess, yet I am not the savage and relentless victor you seem to think me. True, I am a conqueror, and conquerors must be ruthless with their enemies. In the conquest of Ma Gong I have only begun to extend my domination. Next will come Du Gong, then Lu Gong, and finally all the inhabited and inhabitable planets that circle the great Lord Sun. I will be the greatest conqueror of all time — not merely a conqueror of nations, but a conqueror of worlds.

"But with all this, I have a kind and generous heart. I could take vengeance on you, order your torture and death, or make you my slave, yet so magnanimously am I disposed toward you that I offer you the honor of becoming my queen — of ruling with me, the mightiest empire that has ever come under the control of one man."

"And thus," replied Maza, scornfully, "heap insult upon injury. Give me death — by torture if you will, in preference to that."

"You speak hastily," said P'an-ku, apparently unperturbed, "and in the heat of anger. Like most women you are temperamental. But I do not demand your answer now. You shall have time to think it over. And in the meantime, I have something to show you that will make you forget the relatively insignificant conquest of your people. Come with me and I will show you, even at this moment, the beginning of my conquest of a world."

He signed to the two guards, who closed in on each side of the Princess once more. She was then compelled to follow P'an-ku out of the throne room and down a hallway which led to a large, bullet-shaped elevator. Into this they stepped, and were shot swiftly upward.

XXI. EARTH'S OFFENSIVE

With bevans at the helm and Roger Sanders in command, the mighty interplanetary battleship which was the child of

Ted Dustin's fertile brain, took off from Chicago just four days after Roger's radio conversation with Maza, and one day before his appointment with her in Peilong.

Buildings, housetops and thorofares were packed with millions of people with every conceivable eye-aid from opera glasses to telescopes, tensely awaiting the departure of the "Luna" — for such she had been christened.

She was only two hundred feet in length — smaller than the mighty aerial battleships of the United States Navy. But despite her relative smallness, she could easily have wiped out, in a few minutes, the entire fleet of a hundred great aerial battleships which formed a cordon around Ted's plant, to see her off, and to fire parting salvos. The air about this mighty fleet swarmed with every conceivable type of air craft from the small helicopter taxicabs to huge passenger ships.

Escorted by this stupendous array of air craft, the Luna soared gracefully upward to a height of ten miles — the utmost distance to which any of the other craft could follow her — then shot toward the zenith which such speed that in less than a minute she was lost to the view of the beholders.

Built for warfare of a type never previously contemplated by men of earth, she was a marvel of mechanical perfection and offensive and defensive efficiency. Her powerful atomotor could send her through space at a speed far greater than that attained by any of the planets in circling the sun — a speed so swift that no human eye could follow her movements.

She had two sets of degravitors — one for offensive and the other for defensive purposes. Each of the four central turrets above deck mounted four cannon-like degravitors that would disintegrate the toughest steel up to a distance of twenty-five thousand miles, and other substances at lesser or greater distances according to their various cohesive powers. The two end turrets, fore and aft, each mounted six degravitors of the same size and power as the others, and midway between keel and rail each side of the craft bristled with twelve more of these potent projectors of destruction, which were in movable, ball-in-socket mounts, capable of being pointed in any direction.

The defensive degravitors were much smaller and shorter than those to be used for offense, and instead of being pointed at the ends had short barrels and flaring blunderbuss-like muzzles. Instead of projecting their anode and cathode rays in nearly parallel lines, these weapons shot them out at widely diverging angles — scattered them so much that, placed as they were, their various rays united to form an invisible screen about the craft, impervious either to matter, light rays, or energy rays. When they were turned on the craft could have passed through a rapidly moving planetoid or even a planet without great shock, or danger either from heat, cold, or gravitational force. Sunlight, when striking them, was neither reflected nor absorbed, but converted into a white, innocuous luminescence, electrically and magnetically neutral, yet visible and transparent — a physical paradox that seemed like a ghost of real light.

With these rays turned on, projectiles fired at the craft would be disintegrated before they could reach it. Concentrated rays of either contraction or dispersion, cold or hot, would be rendered harmless, even though they might be admitted in the form of mild, ghostly light.

Sitting in the control cabin in the front of the craft, Roger watched the earth swiftly receding while Bevans, seated before a bewildering array of levers and buttons sent the craft hurtling swiftly toward the moon. The thick glass panels afforded a view upward, downward, straight ahead, and to either side, and mirrors connected with periscopes gave a clear view to the rear.

"This baby sure can step," remarked Roger, glancing at his speedometer. "Thirty-five miles per second on the head at this instant."

"She can that, sir," replied Bevans, "and I haven't opened her up all the way, either."

"A hundred and twenty-six thousand miles per hour." calculated Roger, "and still accelerating. Why man, we'll be there in a couple of hours at this rate — a day ahead of time! It's all right, though. We can hide out in some crater, do a little exploring, get accustomed to the lunar gravity and have target practice with the degravitors. We'll need

it if P'an-ku sends a bunch of those fighting globes of his after us."

Presently Roger looked out the forward window, then said:

"We're getting pretty close to the moon, now. Start easing her down while I decide on a landing place. Better not go too close to Copernicus today. Too near the scene of activities. We might get into a scrap before our allies get there. On the other hand, if we land at Tycho we may be mistaken for enemies and have to fight Maza's guards. I think the wise thing to do will be to land on the central peak of the crater, Pitatus. It's sort of in line between Tycho and Copernicus, and far enough from the latter so we would not be involved in a battle before we're ready. We can keep a sharp lookout, and duck down into that deep valley between Pitatus and Hesiodus if we don't care to fight an approaching enemy."

Bevans, who had memorized the outstanding features of the moon, instantly pointed the craft toward Pitatus while he gradually slowed her headway with blasts from the forward exhaust arms of the atomotor.

In less than two hours after they left Chicago, they landed in a slight depression on the sharp central peak of Pitatus.

The rest of the day was spent in degravitor practice, and in preparation for the morrow's battle. So far as light was concerned, the night was exactly like the day, nevertheless, officers and crew took their turns at sleeping and watching.

It was nearly noon of the next day by their earthly chronometers when Roger, who was about to give orders for the flight to Copernicus, was startled by a call from a lookout in one of the turrets. The voice of the man came from a small electric speaker at his elbow.

"A big fleet of globes coming from the northeast, sir."

Roger took up his binoculars and trained them toward the northeast.

"Must be at least a hundred of them," he said to Bevans, "and they're coming at quite a lively clip. Too late to try and dodge out of sight now. I think the best plan is to keep perfectly still. Moving objects catch the eye much quicker than stationary ones."

"I don't believe they'll notice us here, at all, sir," answered

Bevans, using his own glasses. "Looks as if they are going to pass right over the center of Hesiodus, in which case they'll miss us by about forty-five miles."

The globes were traveling with such speed that it took but a minute for them to confirm Bevans' assertion, which they did, almost to a mile, continuing on toward the southwest.

"Wonder what they're up to," mused Roger. "They seem to be heading straight toward Tycho. Why, it's plain as day. They're sneaking over to attack Maza's capital from above ground while she's attacking theirs from below. Mighty clever of old P'an-ku. Well, here's where our little Luna gets busy."

He gave a few brief orders, and the Luna gently rose from her resting place and set out after the menacing fleet. As soon as he got near enough to Tycho to use his binoculars, Roger saw that the battle was already in progress. Red rays were flashing out at the invaders from the crater walls and central peaks, and *nak-kar* riders swarmed upward from the underground shafts like bees from a hive. The raiders had formed in a huge circle sixty miles in diameter, just outside the crater rim, and were pouring their powerful green rays in on the defenders with deadly effect. Roger saw two of the globes burst into flames and fall, but during that time more than a score of the stationary rays were put out of business, and hundreds of *nak-kar* riders were wiped out.

The fleet of P'an-ku was easily slated for a quick victory before the Luna suddenly entered the lists. Then the degravitors went into action, and the menacing globes began dropping right and left, emitting lurid flashes of light where the invisible rays struck them. Before a green ray could even be trained toward the Luna half of the magnificent war fleet of P'an-ku had been destroyed. Then the green rays came thick and fast, but Roger did not mind them, for his degravitor barrage made them as harmless as sunlight.

Not more than a dozen of the globes remained when the commander of the fleet evidently discovered that his rays could not harm the strange craft from earth, and that his only chance for safety would be in flight. These remaining globes shot swiftly upward — so swiftly that it was difficult for the eye to note their progress, but the Luna was after them in

an instant, and kept them well in range while her marksmen used the degravitors with deadly effect. Soon but one lone globe remained. It seemed to have an especially clever helmsman, who dodged hither and thither with such speed and in such unexpected ways that he had been able to elude the Luna's gunners. He suddenly set out in a zig-zag course toward Copernicus, with the Luna in swift pursuit. A degravitor ray brought him down inside the crater just after he had crossed the rim and was ready to drop to safety.

Bevans was unable to instantly check the forward flight of the Luna, and her momentum carried her ten miles past the crater rim and only a little over fifteen miles from the nearest central peak. Hundreds of powerful green rays instantly flashed up at the invader, and giant globes swarmed upward from the yawning mouths of mighty shafts, to attack. The globes were cut down by Roger's marksmen almost as fast as they emerged, and the green rays did no damage.

Then there suddenly flashed from the second peak of the central group, a mighty green ray so powerful it would easily have made a thousand of the smaller defensive rays. It was pointed straight upward at the earth hanging in the heavens above them, and the spot where it struck — apparently some five hundred miles in diameter, plainly showed as a great greenish-white area in the Pacific Ocean when, a moment later, the ray winked out.

The operators evidently had stopped for a moment to note its effect — perhaps to send a radio message to earth demanding instant surrender or threatening annihilation.

"Turn the degravitors on the peak of that mountain," ordered Roger. "The globes can wait. We'll get them later."

Before his instructions could be carried out it seemed that the ray operator had anticipated them, for the huge green ray flashed out once more, but this time it did not strike the earth. Instead, its powerful, deadly green light enveloped the Luna.

Although the earth-craft was insulated against the cold of absolute zero, and was, in addition, protected by her aura of degravitor rays, she could not help feeling the tremendous power of the terrific deenergizing rays. In an instant her

interior temperature, which had been kept comfortably warm at 70° Farenheit, dropped to the freezing point and rapidly went lower.

"Up," ordered Roger, and Bevans shot the craft upward, temporarily escaping the paralyzing effect of the great ray. But the projector could be turned swiftly, and in a moment it was trained on them again. It was now the turn of the Luna to do some zig-zagging and dodging. As for her offensive tactics, Roger found that his degravitor rays were rendered harmless when in conflict with the rays from the great projector, and only took effect at times when they could, for a moment, elude the huge green beam which came from the mountain top.

"We can't keep this up," said Roger, as the cabin grew colder and colder. "Try diving toward the base of the mountain, then up beneath the projector. I don't believe it can be pointed towards its own base, and P'an-ku will destroy his own city if he points it downward too far."

Bevans instantly dropped the craft to within a hundred feet of the crater floor, then shot toward the base of the peak on which the ray was mounted. The mighty green ray followed them down so far it clipped a great valley through the crater wall behind them, but it could go no further.

"Now!" said Roger, "Let them have it!"

The degravitors were instantly trained on the mountain peak while the craft shot swiftly upward.

XXII. FALL OF PEILONG

WITH TZIEN KHAN and his four painted torturers confronting him in his dungeon cell, Ted Dustin tried frantically to reach his pistol degravitor through the hole he had scraped in his insulating armor, but his efforts were of no avail. The hole was too small. He quickly dropped his hand to his side in order that his attempt to reach the weapon might not be detected.

Tzien Khan took a key from his belt pouch, and said:

"Bend down your head, O spawn of a maggot, that I may remove your collar. And if you have a god, pray to him, for you have but a short time to live."

Ted bent over as directed, and as he did so he heard a tearing sound that filled his heart with hope. While Tzien Khan fumbled with his collar lock his hand stole to his right hip and confirmed his hopes. The act of stooping over had completed the work of the past few days, and his fingers closed over the butt of his degravitor.

As the collar dropped from about his neck, Tzien Khan ordered him to straighten up. He obeyed, but as he did so, whipped out his degravitor, pressed the trigger, and swung it in a narrow arc. The Khan and his four torturers were wiped out before one of them had an opportunity to use a weapon.

"Well done, Ted Dustin!" called Shen Ho from the opposite cell. "I had given you up for dead."

With the aid of his degravitor, Ted quickly got rid of his clumsy suit of insulating armor and appeared before the astonished Shen Ho in the rich garments of black and gold he had worn in Maza's court. Then he released his fellow prisoner by the simple expedient of flashing the degravitor rays for an instant on the collar lock.

As soon as he was freed from his metal collar, Shen Ho armed himself with the weapons of Tzien Khan, belting the richly jeweled sword and ray projector about his waist. Then he took the weapons of the others, made them into a bundle bound together with one of the belts, and strapping the head lamp of Tzien Khan to his forehead, said:

"Come, Ted Dustin. Help me release my brothers, and I will help you find, and, if the great Lord Sun wills, to slay the cruel tyrant who disgraces the great name of P'an-ku."

"If you will help me to find and destroy the big green ray he is going to use against the earth I'll go anywhere with you," answered Ted.

"That I promise to do, also, or give my life in the attempt," replied Shen Ho as they hurried along the passageway.

When they arrived in the circular room at the base of the spiral ramp, Shen Ho turned into the first passageway at his right. Other than bones and dead bodies, he found only four half dead wretches, none of whom he recognized.

Hurrying out of this passageway, he entered the next, and

to his delight found Fen Ho, his youngest brother, alive and able to travel. After the young inventor of the projectiles and firing mechanism had been released and armed, the three men hurried out to the central room and back to the other passageways, one at a time, to search for Wen Ho. They found the inventor of the flying globe in the last passageway, sick, and barely able to talk. Shen Ho took a small phial of medicine from the belt pouch of Tzien Khan, a little of which he dropped on his brother's tongue. Fen Ho, meanwhile, busied himself with cutting the collar from his brother's neck with his green ray projector, and belting a sword and projector about his waist.

The medicine, it appeared, had marvelous stimulating qualities, for Wen Ho quickly recovered his strength, and not only was able to travel with sword and projector belted to him, but insisted on carrying one of the long spears with a buzz saw-like head, which the torturers of Tzien Khan had dropped, and which Shen Ho had brought in his bundle.

"Now," said Shen Ho, "we must pass through the torture chambers in order to get to the upper rooms of the palace. Every man must have his weapons ready as the torturers of Tzien Khan are armed, and quick to draw."

Ted, with a degravitor in each hand, now insisted on taking the lead as they mounted the spiral ramp. On the way up, he met a guard, whose head instantly vanished from the man's neck before a leveled degravitor, and whose weapons were appropriated by the Ho brothers.

Shen Ho extinguished his head lamp, now no longer necessary because of the yellow rays from small globes of luminous liquid, and enjoined absolute silence. As they mounted higher, however, this precaution was made unnecessary by the agonized shrieks of the tortured victims above them.

When they reached the door of the torture chamber, Ted, with both degravitors ready for action, led a quick rush into the room. Twenty painted torturers, taken by surprise, reached for their weapons, but not one reached in time. Then Ted and Fen Ho plunged into the series of smaller chambers on the right, while Shen Ho and Wen Ho took those on the left.

One after another, painted torturers went down before the degravitors of Ted or the green ray projectors of Fen Ho. Presently they reached the last chamber of the series and found no torturer present. It was occupied by but one victim, and Ted cried out in surprise as he recognized him.

"Professor Ederson!" he exclaimed, "and I thought you safe in Chicago!"

A flash of his degravitor cut the heavy cable which held the cylinder of water that was straining the professor's neck cords, and it crashed to the floor. Then, while Fen Ho swiftly released the savant's hands and feet, Ted removed the helmet and chin clamp.

The professor attempted to speak, but his voice failed him, and he suddenly fainted, toppling into the arms of his young friend.

"I'll carry him to the main torture chamber," said Ted. "You find Shen Ho and get that little bottle of medicine that revived Wen Ho. It may work on my friend."

"It will," replied Fen Ho, speeding away.

When Ted reached the central chamber with the slight form of the professor drooping in his arms, he found the three Ho brothers awaiting him.

"Every torturer has been slain," said Shen Ho as he dropped some medicine on the tongue of the professor, "and no alarm has been given as yet, but we must work swiftly."

The professor regained consciousness and the power of speech with remarkable speed, while Fen Ho and Wen Ho busied themselves with releasing such torture victims as were not yet mortally injured and mercifully dispatching the others. These men were armed with the weapons of the torturers and instructed to hold the chambers against all comers.

"Thank you, Ted," said the professor, "and these friends of yours for saving my life. I had reached the end of my rope both literally and figuratively. A few more drops of water in that cylinder would have snapped my cervical vertebrae."

Ted introduced the three brothers to his old friend, and in a few moments the professor declared himself able not only to walk unaided, but to bear weapons. He declined one

of the pistol degravitors when it was proferred him, but took a green ray projector, sword, and buzz-saw spear.

"Now for that big projector of P'an-ku's," said Ted.

"It will be in the second peak," answered Shen Ho. "Follow me, and I'll get you there in the shortest possible time."

He led them along a narrow, winding passageway in which two palace attendants were met and summarily dispatched, to the base of a cylindrical shaft in which there was a diamond-shaped door. Shen Ho pulled once, then twice, then once again, on a tasselled cord that hung down from the center door, and the clang of a gong within answered each pull. Then there was a humming sound from behind the door, and it slid upward, revealing the interior of a large, bullet-shaped car with a lone operator who was attired in armor of brown metal and wore a sword and ray projector in his belt.

No sooner did he see the five men in the passageway, than he reached for the control lever with one hand and his ray projector with the other. He had no chance to use either, however, for Wen Ho, anticipating this, swiftly thrust with his buzz-saw spear for the neck of the operator. As he thrust, he pressed a button in the side of the shaft which started the blade whirling and Ted, for the first time, saw the terrible efficiency of this weapon, the teeth of which cut through the armor plate as if it had been cheese, instantly shearing the head of the guard from his body.

Then body and head were tossed from the car, and the five men, with Shen Ho at the controls, shot upward.

Through the small diamond-shaped windows of the car, Ted saw that they presently shot above the roof of the palace, swiftly climbing a slender cable which extended up into the stalactite covered vault above. Just beyond the distant city walls, in every direction, he could see the flashing of green and red rays which told him that Maza was attacking the city, though he did not suspect that she had been taken prisoner.

The car continued to travel upward on the slender cable until it entered an enormous, cone-shaped shaft more than a mile in diameter at the base, and slanting upward toward

a glassed in opening at the top which was about five hundred feet across, and admitted a considerable amount of light to which there was a queer, greenish cast.

Shen Ho, also looking upward, said:

"See, Ted Dustin. Already they are using the great ray against your world."

"I hope and pray that we will be able to prevent them from using it much longer," replied Ted.

"Amen," said the professor fervently.

Although the car was traveling upward in the shaft, which was plainly a volcanic crater, at a terrific rate of speed, Ted chafed impatiently until Shen Ho moved the control lever, gradually bringing it to a stop. He moved another lever and the diamond-shaped door slid upward, revealing a railed landing platform fastened to the side of the crater.

Ted was the first to step out, and as he did so, he saw a party of people not more than fifty feet away on the same platform. Instantly he recognized the slender figure of Maza, still in her shining armor, being dragged along between two burly warriors while P'an-ku walked ahead. They had just stepped out of a car similar to the one in which he and his companions had come up, and P'an-ku, one foot on a winding stairway which led up into the rock, was saying:

"So now, little white Princess, I will show you the conquest of a world, after which you will perhaps not think so ill of me as a prospective husband. At the head of these stairs is my —"

He did not finish the sentence, for Ted, at this instant, blasted the heads from both the warriors who held Maza, with his degravitors, and the sound of their armored bodies clattering to the floor interrupted him.

He whirled, whipping out a green ray projector, but before he could level it, Ted had destroyed it with a flash from one of his degravitors. He could as easily have destroyed his arch enemy then and there, but preferred to take him prisoner.

"Halt!" he commanded, "or —"

The sentence remained unfinished, for P'an-ku, with an alacrity which was astounding for one of his weight and

years, had suddenly turned and darted up the winding stairway, disappearing beyond a curve in the wall.

In the meantime, the professor and the three Ho brothers had stepped out on the platform and were gazing at Ted, the Princess, and the two fallen warriors in an effort to understand just what had taken place.

"Guard the Princess," Ted called to them. "I'm going after P'an-ku."

With one terrific leap he landed at the foot of the stairway, then bounded up taking ten steps at a time with ease, momentarily expecting to overtake the yellow monarch around each curve. But P'an-ku had had a good start, and evidently was climbing with a speed far greater than that of which he appeared capable.

At length Ted sighted him, climbing a metal ladder which led upward from a platform at the head of the stairway to a room above which was filled with an intricate array of machinery worked by more than a score of armed men and guarded by an equal number. Just above it the giant green ray flashed out horizontally.

This time it was no part of Ted's intention to waste words on P'an-ku. Deliberately he raised a degravitor and sighted for the bullet head of the monarch.

But before he could press the trigger there was a blinding flash of light, and the monarch, ladder, men, machinery and projector — all disappeared from view as completely as if they had never existed. Then there hove into view the prow of a flying vessel on which was inscribed the word "Luna," and Ted shouted for joy, waving frantically at two figures in the control cabin whom he recognized as Roger and Bevans.

The air where he stood was being rapidly vitiated by its sudden contact with the tenuous atmosphere of the outer surface, but Ted stayed long enough to gesture toward the glazed top of the shaft, patted his degravitor, and then pointed one finger downward. Roger nodded as if he understood, and the Luna started for the glazed opening. Then the young scientist, gasping for breath, plunged down the stairway to the platform where Maza, the professor, and the Ho brothers awaited him.

The Luna had already cut through the glazed top when he arrived, and was descending toward the little group on the platform. She drew alongside, opened a door and admitted them before there was any notable change in the quality of the air.

In the happy reunion that followed, Ted, with his arm around his radiant little Princess, presented each of his friends in turn. Then he said:

"We still have work to do. The army of the Princess is storming the city and, I'm afraid, fighting a losing battle against the globes of P'an-ku."

"We can settle those globes in short order," replied Roger. "After 'em, Bevans! You should have seen what we did to the fleet sent against Ultu."

"What did you do to them?"

"Cleaned 'em out to the last globe," replied Roger.

"Then you saved my city!" exclaimed Maza. "How can I thank you?"

"Don't thank me," replied Roger, "thank Ted. Besides, he's in a better position to collect a reward than I am. Excuse me, please, while I direct the degravitor fire."

Protected by her degravitor barrage, the Luna first descended to a position just above the great docks of P'an-ku, where she made short work of the reserve fleet. Then she rose and circled the city, safe from the menace of either red or green rays, leveling the walls with her keel degravitors while the gunners in the turrets picked off the globes.

Quickly recognizing a friend in the strange and seemingly indestructible craft, the hosts of Ultu cheered, and went into the battle with redoubled vigor. In less than twenty minutes after the Luna had come on the scene, the last globe was destroyed and the city was in the hands of Maza's army.

The Luna stopped in the palace courtyard for several hours, during which time Maza proclaimed Shen Ho Viceroy of Peilong — then proceeded to Ultu, where Ted and his Princess were married in regal magnificence, according to the ancient rites and customs of Maza's people.

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